OF THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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Ετοιμοι ἀεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογίαν πάντι τῳ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος. 1 Pet. 3. 15.

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The Introduction.

IT hath always been accounted more *Reasonable* to doubt of *Principles* first, and then to throw off the Deductions that naturally arise from them, then to contest the *Conclusions*, when the *Principles* or *Premisses* are granted. This occasioned that saying of *Picus Mirandula*, That the *Speculative Atheist was the greatest prodigy, but one, and that was the Practical Atheist.* To acknowledg *Christian Religion* to be true, and consequently that without sincere *obedience* to all *Christs Precepts*, not onely the infinite rewards of the Gospel are forfeited, but the infinite torments become our portion; and yet to live lives of profaneness, and luxury, and indulgence to every liberty, that suites with our humors, without fear, or discomfeiture of minde, is a *shortness of discourse*, that no man that hath consideration enough to examine, or judgement to compare, can choose but discern and condemne in himself. As therefore the * *Epicurean* that was resolved not to be represt, or live in the awe of *Religion*, and *Priests*, counted it but necessary to disbelieve the perpetuity of torments beyond this life, so hath it been

Sect. 1.

* ---*nam si nullum finem esse putarent Ærumnarum homines, nulla ratione valerent, Religionibus atq; minis obsistere vatum.* Lucret. l. 1.

been Satans method (and the advantage which he hath taken of these times, from the commonness of casting down *mounds* and *hedges*, of *disputing*, and questioning the most establisht Truths) to offer it to the Reason and Judgment of his Clients, Whether it be not more easie and hopeful to break up the *foundation* it self, then, while that remains in its firmness, to demolish that which is *erected* upon it, and by entangling men in those *practices*, which render them uncapable of receiving *benefit* by *Christianity*, to oblige them to endeavour to cast off the *doctrines*, and to rid themselves from the ill *consequences* of it. Thus have some men taught themselves the *skill*, and dexterity of *unravelling principles*, and by giving themselves *liberty* to *disobey Christ* in some *pleasant*, or *gainful* particulars, have at last in their *own defence* (that they may *salve* their *phænomena*, and appear *congruous* to themselves) arrived calmly to the *scorners chair*, the casting off *Christianity* it self.

Sect. 2. In stead of gainless complaints, I shall therefore hasten to give some check to this *growing evil*, and reduce the whole matter of debate to these two heads.

Sect. 3. First, I shall consider the *Grounds of Christianity* in the *gross*, or *bulk*, *all of it together*, and in some measure, justifie the *reasonableness* of them; and then secondly, I shall descend in the *retail*, to the survey and vindication of those *particular* branches of *Christianity*, which appear to men at this time to be least supported with *Reason*.

Chap. I.

The Grounds of Christianity, or the Reasons upon which men embrace Christian Religion in the gross, all of it together.

Sect. 1. IN lieu of the *many grounds* (or several branches, and improvements of the same *one* complicated ground) which * other men have very rationally enlarged on, This present discourse (which desires not to expatiate, nor to suppose the *Reader* to have renounced

* *H. Grotius*, and *Phil. Morney du Pleisse*, &c.

ced his *Christianity* wholly) shal confine it self to these two heads: First, the *Testimony* on which *Christianity* is built: Secondly, The *advantages* that those, which embrace it, shall reap by it. The first will render the belief *rationall*, and conclude it *impious* to doubt of it. The second will render the belief *gainful*, and conclude it most *uncharitable* to our selves, yea, and *unsafe*, and *treacherous* not to adhere to it. The first will pronounce it, with the *Apostle*, a *faithful saying*; the second, *worthy of all acceptation*. The first will reconcile it to our *brains*, the second to our *hearts*: The first will give it possession of our *understandings*; the second will ravish our *wills* with the beauty and luster of it.

The *Testimony* on which we beleive *Christianity*, *i. e.* on which we beleive that *Christ* was sent from God, to *reveal* his *Fathers* will unto us, and to be *beleived* in all that he delivered to the World, (which, when it is *beleived*, it necessarily follows, that all and every part of *Christian Religion* is infallibly true, and capable of no farther doubting) is the most important, and *convincing* of *beleif*, or *faith*, which can be imagined. *Sect.* 2.

For if the *Apostle* had not said it, it is yet in it self most evident to common sense, That *Faith commeth by hearing*, *i. e.* that I cannot *believe* any thing to be true on any better, nay on any other ground, but onely that I *hear it* thus *affirmed*: And as the *affirmation* is, such is the *belief*: If the *affirmation* be from a *fallible person*, from a meer man, the *belief* must be a *fallible belief*, but if the person affirming be *infallible*, then is the *belief infallible* also. *Sect.* 3

That *infallible affirmer* is but one, *viz. God*, of whose nature it is, to be *veracious*, to be able to do any thing, but to lie, which was also affirmed by *Christ* out of the *Principles* of common nature. *Let God be true, and every man a lier*, *i. e.* though no *infallibility* of *testimony* can be attributed to any meer man, yet whatsoever is *testified* by *God*, doth certainly deserve to be fully credited. *Sect.* 4

And therefore if *God* shall *testifie* the truth of any thing, there can be no farther *scruple* or *possibility* of *doubting*, or suspecting the truth of what is so testified, then there is *actuall doubt*, whether the *God* of Heaven be *God*, or whether the *God of truth*, *Sect.* 5.

be the *father of lies*: which as it is a degree above the *denying of Christ*, and above the infidelity either of the *Jew*, or *Mahometane*, or even of *Heathenism* it self, in that notion, wherein it signifies the [a] acknowledgment of *more gods* then one, (for all that have adored any *deity*, have acknowledged that *God*, or *gods* to [b] *speak nothing but truth*) so is the pretending to it peculiar to very few since the beginning of the World. There being not many that appear in story to have affirmed that there is no *God* at all, and those not able to perswade others, that they did believe themselves when they so affirmed.

[a] πολυθεότης τῶν ἐθνῶν.

[b] ἀληθεύειν καὶ εὐεργετεῖν, *Pyth.*

Sect. 6. Now this *affirmation* or *testification* of *God*, that *Christ* was sent from him, to declare his will to us &c. (upon which being once supposed, the truth of *all Christian Religion* truly so called, is immediately and infallibly founded) hath more then one way been authentically interposed. Such are the many repeated *testimonies* of the *Prophets* in the *Old Testament* (which finding a perfect completion in *Christ*, and none but *Christ*, do amount to a *divine testimony*.) Such was the coming of the *Angel* to *Mary* the *Mother* of *Christ*, and to *Elizabeth* the Mother of *John Baptist*, in the *New Testament*; as also the *Star* which lighted the wise men of the East unto him, (and of which the * *Heathens* themselves have affirmed, not onely that it was an *especial Star*, that never before *appeared in the Heaven*, but also that it had a *portentous significancy*, *pointing at the descent of a venerable God, for the salvation of men, and the good of Mortals*) So again that of the *Miracles* wrought by *Christ* and his *Apostles*, which are another kinde of *Gods* speaking to us *in* men, and upon Earth (particularly that of *raising* the *dead*) and are by the *Apostles* styled, what in *reason* they are, *demonstrations*, *Acts* 2.22. and *testifications* of *God* himselfe, *Heb.* 2.4. But above all his own *Resurrection* out of the Grave, after he had been Crucified by them. *God* by thus raising him is said (most truly according to the dictates of *reason*) to have [a] *given to all men Faith*, i.e. an *argument* of full *conviction*, that he was what he pretended to be, and so

* *Est quoque alia venerabilior & sanctior historia, quæ perhibet ortu stellæ cujusdam insolitæ non morbos moresque præmuntiatos, sed descensum Dei venerabilis ad humanæ servationis* (without question ἀνθρωπίνης σωτηρίας in the Greek, though that be not extant) *rerumque mortalium gratiam, quam à Chaldæis observatam fuisse testantur, qui Deum super natum meteribus venerati sunt. Calcidius in Plat. Timæum*, p. 219.

[a] πίστιν παρέχων πᾶσιν, Acts 17.31.

to

to g *set him out* as the person to be *believed* on, h being *powerfully* and *determinately pointed out*, by that great act, *to be the Son of God*. But because all of these would much *lengthen* this *discourse* above the designed proportion, and because each of them are largely insisted on by others, and because no *testimony* is ordinarily deemed more *Authentick*, then that of *audible voice*, I shall therefore choose principally to insist on that one ordinary way of Gods testifying to men, known to the *Jews* by the title of בת קול, the *daughter of voice*, or of *thunder*, i. e. a *revelation* from *Heaven*, delivered in (or coming out of the midst of) *thunder*, which, say the *Jews*, was the speciall way of Gods *revealing* himself under the *second Temple*.

g ἐγειραντα αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ δόξαν αὐτῷ δόντα, ὥστε τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν εἶναι εἰς θεόν. 1 Pet. 1. 21.

h ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ, ἐν δυνάμει ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Rom. 1. 4.

And by this God *three* times gave *testimony* to *Christ*. *First*, immediately after his *Baptism*, *Behold, the Heavens were opened to him*, i. e. visibly and miraculously parted asunder, *and he*, i. e. *John* that baptized him, *saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and coming upon him*, i. e. descending, as a Dove descends upon any thing, visibly hovering & lightning on them, *And behold, a voice out of the Heavens saying*, i. e. as the Heavens parted asunder, a clap of thunder came out, and with it a voice delivering these words, *This is my beloved Sonne, in whom I am well pleased*, i. e. this is my Son, whom I have sent, his *comming* to the world, and his *undertaking* is perfectly agreeable to, and hath its original wholly from my *will*: From which *testimony* of *Gods*, it is consequent, That whatsoever he teaches, comes from *God*, and is to be embraced, as that which is perfectly his *Will*, and *Law*. And it is observable that in one of the old prophecies of the *Messiah*, where it is foretold, that *Gods Spirit should descend upon him*, it is affirmed almost in the very words, which were here said to come out of the *thunder*, that *this was Gods beloved*, in *whom his soul* (i. e. he) *was well pleased*. *Sect. 7.*

So again a *second time*, in the presence of *three sober men* (which was the number, by which the weightiest matters were authentically *testified*) *Peter*, and *James*, and *John*, being all with him in a mountain, *Behold, a lightsom cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: Hear him*. Giving an unquestioned *authority* to all, that should ever come from him after. *Sect. 8.*

Thirdly,

Sect. 9. Thirdly, At a time, not long before his death, when he was a praying to his *Father*, to *glorifie his Name*, *A voice came frō Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorifie it again.* And of them that *stood by*, *some said that it thundred, others, that it was an Angel that spake to him*: From both which, it is easily concluded, That *God*, whether by, or without the *Ministery* of an *Angel*, was heard to *speak* to him out of the *Thunder*.

Sect. 10. What was thus done *personally* to *Christ*, was with some small variation *promised*, (and so by *John Baptist* first foretold) that it should be performed (after his departure) to his *Apostles*, or *Disciples*, who were to preach his Doctrine, and what they knew of him, after his going out of this world; and accordingly, in the very manner which was fore-told, it came to pass, as all other things foretold by him, did punctually follow. For as *they were all together*; *there was suddenly a noise from Heaven, as of a violent wind, and filled the whole house where they sate.* And so this (styled the i *Baptizing them with the Holy Ghost*, *i. e.* Receiving them with a far higher *Ceremony* then that of *Baptism*, *viz.* with a *shining glorious descent of the Spirit of God* upon them) did at once give them their *Commission* from *Heaven*, and was a *testimony* of *God* himself, That what they should teach from *Christ*, was the very doctrine, which *God* required to be embraced by the World.

i Acts 1. 5.

Sect. 11. And of this sort there was yet farther one most *eminent* passage. A known and eminent *Jew*, one *Saul*, who by his *Sect* (a *Pharisee*) and by his extraordinary *warmth* and *zeal* to the *Jewish Law*, in opposition to *Christianity*, had interessed himself professly in the *persecuting* of it, had a principall hand in the putting St. *Stephen* to *death* (as appears by the *witnesses*, *laying their garments at his feet*. Acts 7. 58.) and was engaged in a most *vehement*, bloody designe against the *Christians* in *Damascus*, and having gotten *Letters* of Commission from the *High Priest* to that purpose, *Acts* 9. 1. was now very *rageful* upon his *way* thither; This man thus *breathing out threatnings*, *and slaughters against the Church*, and as he was close to *Damascus*, his journeys end, on a sudden a *light from Heaven shone about him*, like *lightning* flashing about his ears; and *falling to the ground*, by that means he heard a *voice* saying to him, *Saul*, *Saul*, *why persecutest thou*

me

me? In words so convincingly delivered, that he knew assuredly, that it was *God*, that by an *Angel* thus appeared, and spake to him; and thereupon he gave answer immediately, *Who art thou Lord?* The *voice* replyed, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*, with the addition of other words, which struck him into such a *horror*, that immediately *trembling*, and in *agony* of *Passion*, *He said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* And was again answered, what he shold do, *Go unto the City*, and there he should receive particular *Directions*. Which accordingly happened, and this person became immediately a *prime Apostle*, or *Preacher of Christianity*. This thing was not done *privately*, but every circumstance of the story was publickly known at that time; his *Letters* from the *High Priest* were known to the *Sanhedrin*; and before he came to *Damascus*, the news of them was come thither, so far, that *Ananias* a *Christian* there, that in a *vision* from God was bid to go to him in such a house, made this objection against obeying the *command*, That this was the *man*, that had done so much mischief, and was now come with such a *Commission* to apprehend all that *profest the worship of Christ* in that place. And besides, there was company with him on the way, when the *prodigy* befel him, and all they *heard the voice*, and *saw no body*, *Vers.* 7. 'Tis true indeed, that in one relation of that passage, *Acts* 22. 9. it is said, That they *heard not the voice*. But that (as all other seeming *contradictions* of the *Scripture*) is easily salved by observing, that the word קול in *Hebrew*, which signifies a *voice*, signifies *thunder* also, as *Hebr.* 12. 26. *Whose voice*, i. e. *Thunder shaketh the earth*, and so very often. And so where it is said, That they *heard the voice*, the sense is, That they *heard the thunder*, which was joyned with the *lightning* that flasht about him; and when it is said, They *heard not the voice*, it is expresst in the place, what is meant by it, *They heard not the voice of him that spake to him*, i. e. *The voice of Christ* immediately *appearing* from *Heaven*, and *calling* unto him, *Saul, Saul, &c.* but onely *saw the lightning*, and *heard* the *thunder*: but what was said to him, he onely heard that was concerned in it, but by the *effects*, his *answers*, and consequent *change*, they easily *discerned* that also, though they *heard* it not. This story did this man alwaies avow as a *notorious* Truth, whensoever he

was called in question by *Jews* or *Romans*, for Preaching *Christ*; and there was never any question made of the truth of it: And this went for his *Commission* to be an *Apostle* of *Christ*; and he never *sought* for any other: And after doing more *service* in the *Church*, then all the rest of *Christs* own (regularly *chosen*, and designed) *Apostles*, he at last laid down his *life* for the *testimony* of that *Truth*, which before this he had so sharply *persecuted*.

Sect. 12. This is not all yet; for at the beginning of the diffusion of the *Gospel* to the Gentile World, and for the declaring of *Gods* Will in that particular, there was not onely a *vision* to *Cornelius*, and an *extasie*, and an *audible voyce* from Heaven to Saint *Peter*, in these words, *Arise* Peter, *kill and eat*, (the obscurity of which words, and of the *representation*, to which they belonged, was presently interpreted by the *effect*.) But beyond both these, it follows, That at the Preaching of *Peter* to *Cornelius*, and the rest of his company of *Gentile believers*, the *Holy Ghost fell on all that heard the Word*, i. e. probably came down upon them in some way of *visible appearance*, (the like a *as* before had befaln the *Apostles*,) or if not so, yet in such manner, as evidenced it self by giving them power of *speaking strange languages*, and other gifts, and graces, fitting them for several conditions in the *Church*: And this was seen by the *Jews*, that were very far from being inclinable to believe such a thing of *Gentiles*, and being convinced by the evidence, b were *astonished at it*, rapt with *admiration* at the *strangeness*, but no way *doubting* the *truth* of it: And it so fell out, that *Peter* afterwards being called in question by other *Jews*, for what he had then done in Preaching to *Gentiles*, (which they thought utterly unlawful) by this relation of the *descent* of the *Holy Ghost* upon those *Gentiles*, c he *satisfied* them; which sure he could not have done, if there had remained any doubt of the truth of it. And the same fell out again to the *Ephesian Disciples*, and the *truth* that it did so, was evidenced, by their *speaking* all *strange Languages* (which they had never learned) *and prophecying*. Two *gifts*, which were so constant consequents of that *coming* of the *Holy Ghost* on any, that they testified it convincingly to those, that had no evidence of the *fact*.

a Acts 10. 44. See Acts 15. 8. & 11. 15. & 17.

b Vers. 45.

c Acts 11. 15. & 18 Acts 19. 6.

The

The propriety of this *descent* to this turn, and to that other grand one of giving *Commissions* (and *authorizing*, and so *testifying* the *truth* of all that should be *taught* by them, on whom the *Spirit* thus descended) may perhaps be better understood, by remembring the *customs* appointed by *God* among the *Jews*. Those that were, among them, called to be *Prophets* out of their *Schools*, were assumed, and *consecrated* to it by *anointing*, (a ceremony of *advancing* to some *eminent office*; and therefore the *Chaldee Paraphrase* for *unction*, reads ordinarily דבא *advancement*.) Now for many yeers, before this coming of *Christ*, *Prophecy* had failed among the *Jews*: Under the *second Temple*, say they, there was no *Oyl*, nor any [a] way of *Revelation*, save only that of the *voice from Heaven*. Now therefore when *God* was thus pleased to send His Son, to reveal his compleat Will unto the World, and from him to continue the same, by his *Apostles*, and others after him; in stead of that solemn *Ceremony* of *Unction*, is this visible *descent of the Holy Ghost* on him, and on them, in a *shining fiery cloud*, and with it these words of *consecration* to *Christ*, *This is my Beloved Son*, &c. and in lieu of that voice, the *gift of Tongues*, to the *Apostles*, and *others*. This was foretold by one of the *Jewish Prophets* long before, That the *Lord should anoint him to Preach*, and that the *Spirit of the Lord should be upon him*, *i.e.* that he should be *anointed*, *i.e.* *ordained* to this office of *Preaching Gods Will*, not by *material oyl*, but *spiritual unction*, by the real *descent* of the *Spirit* of *God* upon him. And accordingly one of his Disciples, Saint *John*, being to confute a sort of *Antichristian Hereticks* of his time, which denied *Christ* to be come *really* in the *flesh*, useth no other Argument (to fortifie them, to whom he writes) but onely the mention of this *Testimony* from *Heaven*, this *descent* on *Christ* and the *Apostles*, and others, who had instructed them in *Christianity*; which he vails under the title of the *Unction*, *viz.* that *unction* vulgarly known among them by that name; the *unction from the holy One*, as he calls it, *i.e.* from *God in Heaven*, by which (as by their *Teachers* it had been communicated to them

Sect. 13.

[a] *Gradus Revelationis Divinæ quatuor, Nesuah prophetia per visionem, & spectra. Ruach Hacadosh, afflatus Spiritus Sancti, qui erat sine istis, ut in David, &c. Urim & Tummim in pectorali judicii* (splendescentia pectoralis, seu *Hoschen* prænuntians *Judæis* victoriam, quod cessavit splendescere. *An.* 200. antequam ego scriberem, inquit *Josephus*, cum *Deus* irascceretur ob transgressiones Legum, vid. *Suid.* in voce *Ephod*) & *Bath Col*, i. e. *vox cœlitus audita, & hæc ultima erat sub templo secundo, &c.* vid. *P. Fagium in Targum Pentat.* Exod.

them) they *knew all things* (*i.e.* were sure that the Doctrine they had been taught, was true) and *needed not to be taught by any*, *i.e.* wanted no more *Arguments* to confirm this truth unto them: That *unction*, as he farther addes, *teaching them of all*, *i. e.* giving them sufficient *instructions* in that matter, and in all other such *fundamental* truthes of the *Christian Doctrine*, testified to them by those who had been thus *anointed* immediately from *Heaven*, authorised to teach them Truth: This same again, as far as concerned *Christ*, is by another [a] *Evangelical* writer joyned with his *working of Miracles*, and called *Gods anointing him with the Holy Ghost, and with power*, (as in [b] another place *Gods anointing him*, alone) which is directly the same with that other phrase used by Saint *Paul*, the [c] *demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*, the *descent of the Spirit*, and *working* of *Miracles*: The two things, which he urged to the *Jews* or *Heathens*, whereseever he preached, (as things, which he was sure, they could no more contradict, then *demonstrations* themselves, there being so many then alive, that could witness the *truth* of them.) In which respect, he after tells them, of *Gods* having *confirmed them into Christ, and anointed and sealed them*, all in the same sense, to signifie *Gods* having afforded them these convincing *testimonies* of the *truth* of *Christianity*, preached to them by those, on whom the *Holy Ghost* had *descended* and who wrought *Miracles* among them.

a Acts 10. 38.

b Acts 4. 27.

c 1 Cor. 2. 4.

Sect. 14. That this was a very *competent confirmation* of the *Doctrine* of *Christ*, may yet farther appear by considering, first the *persons* to whom this was to be done, the then *Church of God*, the *people of the Jews*, which were acquainted with his *voices*, and his *Prophets*, and his *Occonomies* formerly among them: Secondly, the *matter* that was thus to be confirmed, no greater *change*, then to which this way of *attestation* may in reason be deemed abundantly *proportionable*. For the things to be *beleived*, onely the real *completion* of some things, which had been before *foretold*, and the *revealing* some *truths*, which had been more *obscurely represented* in the *Old Testament*; and then those, how *high* and *mysterious* soever, yet being clearly *revealed by Christ*, and the *Apostles* in the *New*, and the explicit *belief* of them, no further required of any, then in *proportion* to the degree of the *revelation* of them, the *revealing* of them must be looked on, as the *satisfying*

ing of an *appetite*, a desire of more *knowledg* (which is *naturally* in all men, and is *sharpened* by the having received some *imperfect rayes* of it) and consequently should not in *reason* be expected to be attested with such a *pomp* of *signes*, and *prodigies*, as *impositions* of *tasks*, and *exactings* of *obediences* are wont to be. Then for the things to be done in *Christianity*, the *duties* and *observances*; It is again considerable, that the *change* in that respect was not such, as would *denominate* it a *new Religion*, but onely the *reforming* and *perfecting* that which was before received among the *Jews*, and the making it more *tolerable* and easie to be received by other parts of the (*Gentile*) World. The *worship* of the *one true God, Creator of Heaven and Earth*, (contrary to the *false worships* of the *many gods* and *idols* of the *Heathens*, and to all the *unnatural lusts* attending them) had been sufficiently testified to the *Nation* of the *Jews*, by many *voices* from *Heaven*, and undeniable attestations of *God* himself (and indeed to other *Nations* by the *fearful*, *miraculous* judgments, shewn in *Egypt*, and on the *Canaanites*, under the conduct of *Moses*, and *Joshuah*, *&c.*) and by *Gods* continual *residing* among that people, and his *attesting* that by the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by the several *Prophets* sent by him, and the other ways of *revelations*. And to those that granted all this, it was foretold (so often that no *Jew* doubted of it) that there should come days of *Reformation*, that there should come a *Messias*. This was long ago *premised* through all passages of their story; to *Adam* under the title of the *Seed of the woman*; to *Sem*, that *God should dwell or pitch his tabernacle in the Tents of Sem*, take *flesh* upon him in *his family*; to *Abraham*, to *Judah*, to *David*, and all along through the writings of their *Prophets*: Concerning this *Messias*, their *carnal* hearts had pre-conceived some *mistakes*, as that he shou'd be a *glorious King* here, and make them again, (after their being *subdued* by the *Romans*) a most *victorious*, *glorious* people on *Earth*, and this, howsoever they demean'd themselves, onely by the *priviledg* of having *Abraham* (to whom great *promises* were made) *to their father*. At last this *Messias* (otherwise described by their *Prophets*, as one that should come in a *mean* and *lowly* manner, no way *desireable* to the *eye* of the world, *Isa.* 53.) *comes* just as he had been *foretold*, a *forerunner* being sent before him, on purpose to *prepare*

his way, to dispossess them of their fond *perswasions* of their *absolute election* (by having *Abraham* to their *father*) and *pointing* him out particularly as the *Son of God*, the *Messias* that was now to be received (as he had been so *greedily*, and so long *expected*) by them. This *forerunner*, that thus foretold, and after pointed him out, was (as they, that *crucified Christ*, confess) by all the * *Jews* taken for a *Prophet*. And moreover to this *testimony* of this *acknowledged Prophet*, comes in the addition of the *miraculous descent* of the *holy Spirit*, and the *voice from Heaven*, and all that hath been mentioned consequent to that. And to those, among whom this had always been acknowledged an *authentick* way of *attesting Gods* will, nothing could be more required but this; *Christ* then (or *God* himself in *humane nature*, assumed of a *virgin*, and born after a *supernatural* manner) when he came to thirty yeers old (the age of a *Doctor* among that people) sets to this business, which it was foretold he should perform, tells them how the former *law* was to be reformed, (and especially their former *lives*, from *external* observances to *internall purities*) and how to be *filled up*, and *perfected* in some particulars; and then lightly changes some *ceremonies* customary among them, and *accommodates* them to present use, removes the wall of *division*, which had been between *them*, and all the rest of the *world*, shews them, that that was meant onely to keep them from imitating the *Heathens sins*, and now that there was more need that *Heathens*, and they should *love* one another, and joyn to *reform* both their lives, and practice *Christian virtues*, then keep that *supercilious distance* from one another; and in a word, he brings the whole matter to such a *model*, as all other men, but the *Jews*, like extremely better, then that which was before among them, and consequently, come in, in sholes, at the *preaching* of it: And the *Jews*, that doe not so, acknowledg the onely reason why they do not, to be their *zeal* to their *law* of *outward* performances, and the *perswasion* of their *absolute election*, that is, in effect, that they had no other *quarrel* to him, but onely that he did not teach the *doctrines* that they *liked*, and were before imbued with, which if he had, he had by that very means done contrary to the *prophecies* by them allowed of, which foretold he should work a *reformation*.

* Matth. 21. 26.

Upon

Upon these *unreasonable* terms, they *crucifie him*: And by their doing so, more wonderful *attestations* yet are given to all this. In his very *death* the *Sun* is miraculously *eclipsed*, at a time of the *Moon*, when by *nature* it was absolutely *impossible*, and so far against all *rules* of *Astronomy*, that *learned* men in other places took notice of it to be a *violence* done to *nature*, which must signifie some great matter. Then a *prodigy* befalls the *Temple*, and that a very *significant one*. Then the *bodies* of many dead men arise and go to *Jerusalem*, and are seen by many. But above all, he himself *riseth* from the *dead*, and *Angels* again are sent to give notice of it: And those that at his *death* had feared themselves *deluded* (as *adversity* is a great *temptation*, and by *Christ* himself, *foretold* to be so) are every one of them *confirmed* by *seeing*, *touching*, *talking with him*: And what is *seen*, and *testified* by them, was *seen* also by *five hundred persons at once*, which lived many years to *attest* the truth to all that doubted it; And at length (which was the most immediate *testification* of the truth of all the former) he is *bodily* and *visibly taken up* into *Heaven*, before their eyes.

When that was done, there was but one imaginable method behinde, that, according as he had *promised*, while he was upon Earth, he should, being himself *departed*, *send the Paraclet*, which by *descending* visibly upon the *Apostles*, and by enduing them with the *gift* of doing *Miracles*, and of *speaking of all Languages*, which they were known never to have learnt, should enable them to *convince the World*, by the *testimony* of *Christs Resurrection*, and *Ascention*, and *destroying* of *Satan* by his *death* (the most improbable means of working *victories*) that he was the *Messias* foretold, that *Seed of the Woman*, that should *break the Serpents head*. On strength of this, they which so lately *doubted*, now *cheerfully lay down their lives*, in *testifying* of all these truths: And those *Jews* that did not yet *believe* on him, were according to his distinct *predictions*, many times repeated, (they, their *Temple*, in which they *trusted*, their *City*, their *whole Nation*, and infinite multitudes of them, wheresoever they were *found*) most stupendiously destroyed by the *Roman Eagles* or *Legions*. All this (thus hastily put together, so as necessarily to omit many weighty circumstances under every head) is sure *Sect.* 15.

prodigy

prodigy enough to *attest*, and *authorize* no greater a *change*, then the *clearer Revelation* of some *obscurer truths*, the *confutation* of some *false Doctrines*, and the *Reformation* of some *ceremonies*, and the *perfecting* and *heightning of some Laws* less *perfect* before, and the *instituting* of a few *useful ceremonies* in stead of many *burthensome ones* can be thought to amount to.

Sect. 16. This *first ground* of beleiving *Christianity* being thus mentioned, is not capable of any dispute from any *reasonable* man, unless from him which shall question, whether this be not *fabulous* in the relation, *i. e.* whether first there were ever indeed heard such *voices*, or secondly, whether they were not *delusions* of the *hearers*, or at least the voice of some other, and not of God. And to him that shall make the former scruple, I shall be able to give as satisfactory an answer, as is possible to be given, of a matter of *this nature*, of any the lightest or weightiest consequence: To a matter of *this nature*, I say, *i.e.* of a *matter of fact*, (for such it must needs be, that such a voice was heard from *Heaven*) and that *fact* past so many hundred yeers ago: For first, that *fact* was of necessity to be confined to some *determinate time* and *place*, to be done somewhere, and why not in *Judæa*, where it is said to be done? to be seen by some *particular* men, and by them of necessity (if it were to be known) to be *attested* to others; nay, if it had been done so as to be heard, and seen by the *whole World* then living, (though that this should point out that one person *Jesus*, would not be well reconcileable with that, because his *body* could not be in *every* place) yet could not the next Age come to *know* this, but must be forced to make use of the *attestation* of men of that Age to reveal it to them, and so proceed by the very way that now is allowed us, that of *faith* or *beleiving*. For secondlly, should there at this hour come the *like voice from Heaven*, in the hearing of any the most creditable honest men of this Age, what way would be expected to convince the Ages to come (who should not be present to hear it) of the truth of this, but by the *constant affirmation* of those, who are now *ear-witnesses* of it, and by their committing all this to writing now, so that all that should now live, and *suspect*, or beleive it a forgery, might be able to examine and discover the truth of it; especially, if to that they should joyn the doing of the greatest *Miracles*, which coming onely from

from *God*, cannot be conceived to be by him allowed to *assist* the bringing a *lie* into the World.

Beyond such *testimony* of *eye*, or *ear-witnesses* thus publickly and authoritatively protested, and conveighed to posterity, there is no *rational* evidence imaginable, for those that lived not in that age; nor doe men at any time exact or require any more *authentick* proofe of matters of *fact*, or ground of *believing* any thing. For as to the *voice of God* again from *Heaven*, (which alone can pretend to be above this) this is not at all commodious to this turn; for this were for *God* to multiply *prodigies*, *improperly* and *unseasonably*, 'tis sure *unnecessarily*, and to all that were not *present*, this would be again as *questionable* as the former. *Sect.* 17.

For the testifying an high important truth, which cannot otherwise be known, God hath been pleased thus *personally* to interpose his own *power*, and *authority*, and to speak from *Heaven*, yea, and to repeat that again and again, that there may no matter of doubt remain concerning it: But when that hath been thus done by *God sufficiently*, then are there sufficient *humane* means to convey the *truth* or *history* of this fact to other men, *viz.* the *testimony* of those, that saw or heard it. And as it were ridiculous to suppose, or expect from *God*, that he should *testifie* from *Heaven*, that such men did hear that former voice from *Heaven*, so the same *Law* of *God*, and *Nature*, which forbids *lying*, as *sinful*, forbids also *incredulity*, as *irrational*, when a thing is by *unsuspected* witnesses, upon *certain knowledg*, with so many *improvements* and *advantages*, thus *sufficiently testified*: And if God upon mans several *incredulities*, should be still obliged to give *witness* to his truths by his own *voice*, then should he cut off that *rule* for *beleif*, which in all other things (agreeably to the *dictates* of *reasonable* nature) he hath made standing among men. And in this case to require any higher *testimony*, were the same inconvenient absurdity, as not to *beleive* any thing upon any other ground, then that of *sight* (which is indeed to mistake *knowledg* for *beleif*, or *evidence* for *adherence*, and must necessarily leave nothing of *virtue* rewardable in that *Faith*, which is so *violently* and *unavoidably* produced) or to expect a *voice from Heaven* to give me daily assurance of all the passages, or *relations* of *history*, *Sect.* 18.

and not to *beleive* that there was such a man as *Alexander*, or *Cæsar*, or *William the Conqueror*, or *Elizabeth* the late (but before our birth) *Queen* of this *Kingdom*, unless some *voice of God from Heaven* attest it to me.

Sect. 19. They that cannot *beleive* at any cheaper rate, then of a new *minuitly prodigy* from *Heaven*, for every act of beleiving a prodigy from *Heaven*, or (more plainly) they that will not *beleive* any thing, but what they *know*, must be *fed* also as well as *taught* by *miracle*, or else must be obliged to *abstinence* (greater then any man inflicts upon himself) by continuing *constant* to that *principle*. For no man hath *demonstration*, or *infallibility*, or *evidence*, for his *safety* in any bit of meat, that he eats, or the *firmness* of any *floor* he stands on; it being always *possible*, that what doth most *nourish*, and *sustain*, might by some *poysonous* mixture, smite and destroy; that the roof that *covers*, and *protects*, might minuitly *overwhelm* and *bury* us; yet are we not such *Hypochondriacks* in these matters of daily use, (and in them that are, it is interpreted an *eminent defect*, or decay of *reason*, and not an higher pitch of it) as to deprive our selves of the benefit of *food* and *raymen't*, upon consideration of these *remote possible* dangers, nor to *fear* all things but what we *know infallibly*.

Sect. 20. And if it shall be said that *eating* is necessary for the *preservation of life*, and that that *consideration* makes it reasonable to trust on those grounds, because by *distrusting*, we should subject our selves to a *certainty* of that, whereof the other is at most but an *hazard*; I answer, First, that this *instance* was produced onely to shew, that we think it *reasonable*, without *fear*, or *doubt*, to relie on some things, for which we have no *demonstration*, or *knowledg* of the *impossibility* of the contrary, and that is still proved by this *instance*, though it be granted, that *eating* is *necessary*; because if the *necessity* of *eating* were the cause that made men *venture* that *hazard*, they should never *venture* it, till they were necessarily to *starve* without it; and when they did so, they should do it with continual *doubt*, and *fear* of the *possible* danger; neither of which are thought *rational*, nor practised by *considering* men. And secondly, the *interpretation* of [*being fed*] in the *instance*, was [the *whole course of men in feeding*] which is not the proportioning of *food* to the *necessities* of life, or the *Lessian*

or

or *Cornarian diet*, but the *free* manner of *feeding* among men, such as was parallel'd to the *standing* on a *floor*, that might possibly *fall*, that is, being in an *upper room*; which being not at all *necessary to life*, and withall *possible* in nature that it shall minuitly be our *death*, is yet made use of among all *Wise men*, with as much *confidence*, and *fearlesness*, as it is expected of us, that we should *beleive* the *Gospel*.

This may be enlarged to the severall *businesses* of the *World*, wherein all men act most *confidently*; to that of *Trafficking*, and *Trading*, and all kindes of *Merchandizing*, which are really mixt with not *improbable hazards*; the whole life of the *husband-man*, is a continual example of those, that think fit to *adhere*, and *beleive*, and *act* accordingly, without having received any *demonstration*. And none of all these are ever counted *irrational*, even by those who have fixed no thoughts beyond this *life*, and the *thriving*, and *prospering* in it, and who consequently are to lose their *chief*, and *onely good*, if it should miscarry, and who in all things of that *nature* are generally as *rational*, and *wary*, and hard to beleive without *securities*, as the wisest men in the World. *Sect.* 21.

And if we will in the business in hand (the *beleiving* of the *Apostles* relations concerning those *Testimonies* given *Christ* from *Heaven*, wherein we have infinitely stronger grounds, to build our *Faith* on, *securities*, and *convictions* incomparably more pregnant and vehement) allow it *reasonable* for us to do that *once*, which in all other things we do confidently every minuit of our lives, *viz. beleive*, what we have all *reason* to *beleive*, without exacting of *evidence* or *demonstration*, there will be no more required of us in this matter. *Sect.* 22.

That this is directly the case in hand, and over and above this, that the *testifying* of the *Gospel* hath all imaginable *advantages*, will appear by a bare application of the particulars. *Sect.* 23.

The *voices* from *Heaven* concerning *Christ*, are testified by the *joynt-concurrence* of all that were present at them, no one finding any cause of *scruple*, or interposing any *doubt* concerning them. Those very *persons* with the addition of many more, are allowed the favor of seeing him after his *Resurrection*, of using all the most *infallible* means of *securing* themselves and others *Sect.* 24.

of the *reality* of this. Being thus assured, they make it the business of their whole *lives* after to *communicate* it to others, some in *writings*, all in *preaching* through all parts of the World, (whither they travelled on purpose to *propagate* this *truth*) agreeing in the whole matter of *story*, and in every circumstance of it. The *truth* of what they say, they again back with *Miracles* on one side, with *completion* of *predictions*, both of the *Prophets* of old concerning *Christ*, and of *Christ*, concerning *them*, and the *succeeding* Ages, (especially that concerning his speedy *coming* in vengeance against his *crucifiers*) on the other side: Both, *Testimonies* of *God*, to authorize *their testimonies*. In propagating this doctrine, as they use not *strength*, or *force*, which hath been the engine by which all other *Religions* have received their growth, so they never endevour to *disturb States* or *Governments*, for (or by) the planting this *Doctrine*, but always Preach *subjection* to the *powers*, which are any where established, and without all *resistance*, Profess (and by their *actions* demonstrate) themselves obliged to *suffer*, whatsoever their *lawfull Magistrates* inflict on them, and contend only with their *prayers* to *God*, that they may *live quietly and peaceably under them*, having still their *cross* in their *hands*, and many times on their *shoulders*, to *follow Christ*. And if this were not sufficient to *prevent*, or to *satisfie* the jealousies of *Heathen Princes*, yet, upon that very account, it is the greater *testimony* of the truth of their *Doctrine*, when they that propagate it, are so far from designing any *temporal* advantages to themselves, which might bribe them to the deposing an *untruth*, that they *actually* part with their very *lives*; and consequently with all *capacity* of those *possible* advantages, and acquire nothing but *reproches*, and *torments* and *death* it self; and all this without any other imaginable *reward*, or *payment*, in *commutation*, or *reparation* for all this, save only the *future* expectation of that, for which they yet had no farther *assurance*, then the *truth* of that, which they thus confest; nay yet farther, when they have given this *costly testimony* to this truth, *God* again bears *testimony* to them, and by Miracles wrought at their *Monuments*, *being dead, they yet speak*.

Sect. 24. That all this is thus *true*, is again it self *testified*, not onely by *records* still extant under their hands, who *wrote* the *Gospels*, and

and the *Acts*, and by *footsteps* and *remainders* of all others *preaching*, wheresoever they taught, but also by the like consent of the *whole Church*, *i. e.* whole *multitudes* of that age, wherein this is pretended to be written and taught, who being *convinced* with the *truth* of what we now enquire after, readily gave up their names to the *belief* of it, and to the consequent *confession of Christ*, though the doing it, did in like manner cost them very dear, the parting with their espoused *customs of livings*, whether among the *Jewish*, or *Gentile* world, their *pleasures*, their worldly *wealth*, and oft-times their *lives* also.

Sect. 26. Beyond all this, the success which attended it, had so much of *strangeness* in it (*viz.* that from such mean and *simple beginnings* and *instruments*, without any kind of *power*, or earthly *authority* to back it, without one *sword* ever drawn in defence of it, *Christianity* should soon obtain such a *victory* over the heart of men, in so great a part of the world) that nothing but *truth*, which hath that *over-ruling* force in it, can be deemed to have been its *Champion*.

Sect. 27. Lastly, that these are the *writings*, those the *tradition* of those *eye-witnesses*, whose they *pretend* to be, and that they were by such *sholes*, such *multitudes* of men of all *Nations* believed then, and that *belief* signed by the *blood* of many, by the *hazards* and *adventures* of most, by the profest *non-resistance* of all, this is as fully *testified* to us, as any matter of *fact* can be supposed to be, by the concurrent *testimonies* of all of that age, which say any thing of it, and by a *generall successive attestation* of all intervening ages, since that time, (the authority of * those writings being never contested by any) *i. e.* by the same means of *probation*, upon which we *believe* those things, which we least doubt of, and against which men cannot feigne any *sound*, or shew of *proof*, save onely that *testimonies* are not *demonstrations*; which exception will in like manner be in a like or far greater force against all other things, which we *believe* most confidently.

* Among the ὁμολογόμενα the *confest* writings of *Scriptures*, attested by *all*, and not ἀντιλεγόμενα *contradicted* by any, τακτέον ἐν πρώτοις τὴν ἁγίαν τῶν εὐαγγελίων τετρακτὺν, οἷς ἕπεται ἡ τῶν πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων γραφή. *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 3. c. 25. The four Gospels are first to be placed, and then the story of the Acts of the Apostles.*

Sect. 28. I am not willing to leave any possible *scruple* unsatisfied in this matter, and therefore I shall proceed to that other *bolder* objection still behind, That that which is pretended to be the *voice of God*, may not have been such, but some *delusion* of the hearers, or at least the *voice* of some other, and not of *God*, as the *devil* in the *oracle* delivered himself by *voice*; and therefore though it be confest, that if this *voice* were *Gods*, it is infallibly *creditable*, yet there will need some certain way of *discrimination*, to assure it was his. To this I answer, That the person whose *objection* this may be supposed to be, is either a bare *Theist*, that acknowledges a *God*, but not the *God* of *Israel*; or else he that acknowledges what the *Jew* did, the truth of the *Old Testament*. I shall reply somewhat to each of these.

Sect. 29. To the *former*, That if this way of *objecting* would be of force, there could be no way for *God* to *reveal* himself to man, *Veracity* would be an *empty attribute of God*, of no signification to us; For it is not imaginable that there should any greater assurance of *Gods* speaking to men, then by the *Heavens opening*, and from thence the *Spirit of God* descending visibly, and *lighting* on one, and out of the *clouds* a voice delivered; whatsoever else can be imagined or named will not be above this. And if all the ways that *God* can use, be not able to give assurance, that it is *God* that speaks, what are we the neer for knowing that *God* cannot *lie*, as long as there is supposed for us no way to know, what at any time he saith? nay, to what use (as to this particular) is his *omnipotence*, if he *cannot reveal* himself to us in such a way, that may be reasonable for us to *believe* to be *his*, and not some *deceivers voice*? Nay, in this, *God* shall not be able to doe so much, as any *ordinary man*; for he can so *reveal* himself, or speak, as no man that is *present*, and doth not *stop* his ears, shall be able to doubt of his speaking.

Sect. 30. To the *second* sort of *objecters*, I answer, That the *objection* will lose all its seeming force, if it be remembred; that although now among us, *voices from Heaven*, are not heard, and (therefore we are not at this *distance* so competent judges of the *clearness* or *certainty*, that such, when they were, were not delusions, and accordingly the *assent* required of us of *this* age, is but *proportionable* to the *grounds* of *belief*, which we enjoy) yet among that

people

people of the *Jewes*, this was very ordinary. *Gods Law* was given to *Moses* in that manner, and *God lead* that people by a *pillar of cloud*, and *fire*, which was answerable to this: And in after times under the *second Temple*, they confess this the *onely way* of *Gods revealing* himself to them. And therefore in this very matter it was allowed, and pleaded by some *prime* men of that *people*, that if *the Spirit, or an Angel had spoken to Paul*, the *resisting him* would be a *fighting against God*: And thereupon, *Acts* 23. 9. they confessed, that they *found no harm in him*; that *God* had thus *spoken* to him, those men then thought *probable*, but did not avow the knowing it certainly, having no present *evidence* of the *fact*, save onely the affirmation of *Paul* himself at that time. But had they had *evidence* of the *fact*, by being present at it, (as they that *testifie* the voice to *Christ*, were *eye* and *ear-witnesses* of it) they would not then have thought *reasonable* to make any farther *question*, whether that, which they call the *voice* of the *Spirit*, or an *Angel*, were such or no, and being such, whether the *resisting* what was spoken by it, were the *fighting against God*. For the *testifying* therefore of the *truth* of such pretended *facts*; and indeed to leave no place for *rational* doubt in this matter, there is yet a farther answer, That the power of *miracles*, and the *gifts* of *tongues* that attended these *voices*, and *descents* of the *Holy Ghost* from *Heaven*, were irrefragable *testimonies*, and *evidences* of the reality of them, and could not be the immediate *effects* of *delusions*, being such as could not be wrought by the *power* of the *devil*, nor ever were pretended the *effects* of his *oracular responses*.

Many other ways of *discrimination* there are, by which the *voices* of the *devil*, or *delusions magical* might be distinguished from *Divine*, as that of *concordance* with *predictions*, acknowledged to have come from *God*; and such was the *voice* that was *delivered* at the *descent of the Spirit* upon *Christ*, the same that was *foretold* by the *Prophet*, and by him joyned with the mention of *the descent of Gods Spirit* upon him. And to the same belongs also the *completion* of the so many other things in him, which had certainly been foretold of the *Messias*, which *Concordance* with *Divine truth*, is most *diametrically* contrary to delusion. And besides, of the *miracles* which he did, most were to *dispossess*, *Sect.* 31.

and

and *cast out divels*, (to *restore health*, as *they* brought *diseases*) who consequently look on him as (and proclaim him) their enemy; and although this may be thought to be done by them for some greater advantage (as the *Devil* may suffer one *charm* to counter-work another,) yet could they not here be thought to have used those *endevours* to raise *Christ* into that power of *destroying* them, or to *assist* their utmost, to give him an *authority* in the world. Indeed the whole doctrine of *Christ* was so directly *contrary* to that, which had been maintained by the *Oracles*, that it cannot be imagined to proceed from that *principle*, to which they pretend. And the story is approved by *Plutarch* (and the *effect* hath made it not *improbable*, that there was some *truth* in it) that about *Christs* time, a *voice* was heard on the *Sea*, that the *great God Pan was dead*, and an *huge bellowing*, and *roaring*, as of *infernal mourners*, following it; and that this was *probably* the *cause*, *acknowledgedly* the *forerunner* of the *Devils silence*, and never speaking in the *Oracles* any more.

Sect. 32. As for the *manner* of the *Devils* giving his *Responses* in the *Oracle*, it is confest by all, that then lived, and knew them, that they were *delivered* constantly by a *man*, who was seen, when he did it, and was called the ὑποφήτης, one that *spake under the Oracle*, out of the *caverns* of the *Earth*, (by the *vapor* of which *Plutarch* conceived him *inspired*, and so turned *Enthusiast*) which is a far different thing from a *voice* (no *man* being *seen*) which came in a *clap of thunder*, with a *bright shining cloud* from *Heaven*. This may reasonably satisfie the importunity of that objection also.

Sect. 33. And so much for the first part of the *ground* of our *Faith* in *gross*, the *testimony* on which it is built, which being an *infallible* word, derived and conveyed to us by the most *creditable* means, and which we have no *temptation* from *Reason* to doubt of, may sure be *concluded* a *rationall ground* of *belief*.

CHAP.

Chap. II.

A Digression concerning the use of Reason in deciding Controversies in Religion.

HAving proceeded thus far for the *convincing* of the *gainsayer*; it may not be amiss to consider the *beleiver* awhile, and give him the *bounds* or *limits*, within which *Reason* is obliged to contain it self, in matters of *Faith*, and this even by the verdict of *Reason* it self. And I shall do it by a brief stating of this Question. *Sect.* 1.

Whether Right Reason be appointed the Judge of Controversies? Whether all doubts of all sorts be to be determined by the dictates of Nature, in the Heart of every Man which hath the use of Reason? *Sect.* 2.

To this I shall ground my answer in these *two Rules*, or *Postulations*. 1. That

The measure of mans *natural* power of knowing or judging of things, is his *participating* of those things (in some degree) with *God*, in whom they are as in the *Fountain*. So that the man may finde, and behold them in himself as *truly*, though not as *eminently*, or in the same *degree*, as they are in *God*. *Sect.* 3.

For certainly, if a man denudate of all *experimental*, *acquired*, *revealed knowledge*, of all forain helps, left onely to himself as a man endued with *Reason*, should be questioned in any thing, and supposed able to express his *conceptions*, he would be fain to fetch out every word that he said, from within him, say onely what his own *heart* could discern within himself, otherwise he should be supposed to answer more, then he had means to come to the knowledge of; The *work* done would be above the proportion of the *means* to it; the *conclusion* would have more in it then the *premises*.

From hence follows this *second Rule*, That

Men are *naturally* able to judge onely of those things, which by some sure connexion depend on those *attributes* of *God*, which are *communicated* to (and particularly by) men, and are the like (as *Sect.* 4.

far as the *adumbration* or *transcript*, is to the *exemplar* or *pattern*) for *kinde*, though not *degree*, in *man* as in *God*.

Sect. 4. Now all *Controversies*, (*i.e.* all things subject to *judgement*) are reducible to two heads, *Goodness* or *Truth*; so that the *Question* now is, Whether *Right Reason can infallibly judg, what is good, or bad, true or false?*

And then to this I answer, First, Concerning the *first* Head.

Sect. 5. For a thing to be *good morally* (for *Metaphysical goodness* is all one with *truth*) depends, by sure connexion, from that *eternal justice* which is primarily in *God*, That being the *rule*, as it is the Fountain, of all *moral goodness* in men, or things: Every thing being *good*, more or less, as it more or less partakes of that *justice*, which is in *God*.

Sect. 6. Now this being one of the *attributes* of *God*, which are called *Communicable*, it is truly affirmed, That that *justice*, which is in *God*, is the very same in *substance*, communicated to *men*, though in a lower *degree*. And therefore it follows by the *second rule*, that man by the light of *nature*, and general *impressions*, *i. e.* by a power of seeing, whatsoever is within his *sphear*, is enabled by *God* to judge what is *just*, what not, what *morally good*, what *bad*. And no man judges amiss in these things, but he that hath his *judgement* corrupted by some *prepossession*, or habituall *vice*, or present prevailing *temptation*; and therefore of *moral* Controversies, *i.e.* whether a thing *naturally*, or in it self, be *good* or *bad*, *just*, or *not*, *Right Reason* is a *Judg*.

Sect. 7. Yet this with this *Caution*, or *limitation*, that it be not extended to those things, wherein the *Law of Nature* hath been *elevated* higher by any positive *Law* of *Christ*. For as *Right Reason* cannot judge what is lawful in any particular *Kingdom*, because what *Nature* hath made lawful, the *Municipal Laws* of that place may have *forbidden*, and made *unlawful*, (and that *Right Reason* cannot take notice of, unless it be told so) so in *Christs Kingdom*, the *Church*, when he hath *forbidden* what *Nature* had left free and unforbidden, *Reason* (untaught by *Christ*) cannot say, that that is *unlawful*, yet generally will be found to bear that *Testimony* to *Christ*, that what *Christ* hath super-added to the *Law of Nature*, *Right Reason* will of its own accord *commend*, as best, or most *laudable*, and *excellent* in them that do it, though not

not knowing any *precept* for it, it will not affirm that it is *necessary*, so as it cannot be omitted without *sin*.

Then concerning the *second Head*, I answer,

That for a thing to be *true*, *i. e.* to have a *Being* either *potential* or *actual*, depends partly on Gods *Power*, partly on his *Will*. In respect of its *potential Being*, it depends on his *Power*, in respect of its *Actual*, on his *Will*. *Sect.* 8.

Now *Gods Power*, though it may in some sense be said *communicable* to the Creature, because all *ability* in the Creature is a gleam of infinite *ability* in God, yet is not this so communicated, as his *Justice* or *Goodnesse* was said to be. For *Goodnesse* in the creature is a kinde of *image* truly resembling the *goodnesse* in God, and that a kinde of *natural image*, as is the face in the Glasse, not a *voluntary* one, which hath its Being from the variable *Will* of the Artificer. But *power*, or ability in the Creature, is not thus a *natural image* of Gods *power*, but as a reflection of a thing, which *voluntarily*, and *variously* casts its beams. *Voluntarily*, I say, because the dispensing of his *Power*, either in *manner*, or *measure*, is a free act of his *Will*; and *variously*, because he doth it, first, *unequally*; and secondly, not so to any, but that he can (and sometimes doth) *withdraw* or *suspend* it, when it is bestowed; so that I cannot say, that as that which is *just* in *God* to be done, is *just* to be done by the Creature, so what is *possible* to be done by *God*, is *possible* to be done by the Creature. *Sect.* 9.

The reason of the *not communicating* of *Gods Power* to the *Creature*, as well as his *Justice*, may be this, because it conduced not to the *end* of the *Creatures* Creation, as the other did: For though *God* intended to make a Creature truly *good*, and *just*, yet he did not truly *powerful*. *Power* indeed being in it self not a *vertue*, as *justice* is, nor in it self *morally good*, or *evil*, and therefore not so agreeable to the condition of a *Creatnre*, but rather indeed peculiar to the *Majesty* of a *Creator*. *Sect.* 10.

From all this it follows by the *said second rule*, that *man* is not able to fathom *Potentiall truths*, because *Power* is not the same in *substance* in *God*, and in the *Creature*, and therefore by what is in the *Creature*, he is no way enabled to conceive what is in *God*, and so consequently to define of any *Potentiall truth*, because though it *may* not be wrought by any thing that is in *Sect.* 11.

the *Creature*, or within his sphere of knowledge, yet it *may* be by *God*.

Sect. 12. All the *natural impression*, or *light*, that in this behalf a *rational Creature* hath, is that *two contradictories cannot be true at once*, and therefore I think, all *Principles* that are not thought fit to be proved in any naturall science, (if they be truly so) may easily be resolved into this one, *A thing cannot at once be, and not be.* And this *natural impression* rises not from any observation of the *power* communicated to the creature,(for then still it would hold, that though *man* cannot do *contradictories* at once, yet God may) but from a sight, that this would be an effect of extreme impotency, more then is conceiveable in any *Creature*, and therefore cannot be imputed to *God*, who is conceived *Omnipotent*, nor consequently to *man*, unless *God* should take away all degrees of *power* quite from him, and then he should be *annihilated*.

Sect. 13. Now for *actual truths* already in Being,which are works either *mediately*, or *immediately* of *Gods Will*, our *Reason* is no farther judg of them, then as *Gods Will* is communicated to us by some Images, or Pictures of it, either *substantiall* and *reall*, as when a thing done, is *presented* to the *faculty*, to which it is *objicible*, there a *real image* of Gods *Wil* is impresst in me, (& by that I may judg distinctly) or when it is *revealed* to me either from God,or from any other *witnesse*, of which in this matter I am convinced, that he partakes of Gods *veracity*, *i.e.* would not lie to me, and this may be called an *intentionall Image* of Gods Will impresst in me.

Sect. 14. Thus may *Right Reason* judg of things in Being, either because it is so really represented to the senses, and that is *evidence*; or becaus is either *revealed*, or else *attested* by God, which *Reason* knows can neither erre, nor deceive, and this is *adherence*; or because such a concurrence of *testimonies* agrees to tell me so, as I have no *Motive* or *Reason* to *disbeleive*, and this is *humane Faith*,(which may reasonably take place, untill I either *see* somewhat, or receive somewhat by an *higher testimony* revealed to the contrary) which also is *weaker*, or *stronger*, according to the *importance* of the matter,*authority* of the *testifiers*,my particular *danger*, if I be deceived in it,*&c.*

Hence

Hence the *Conclusion* is, That

Right Reason is able to *judge* of all meerly *Moral objects*, whether any thing be *good* or *bad morally*; of *Naturall objects* in matter of *fact*, whether such a thing be done or no, by the help of the means specified, and by *discourse*, and *analogy* from things that we see are *done*, to judg that such another thing is *possible*: But of *supernatural truths*, such things as it never discerned in *Nature*, either in the kinde, or the like, it cannot judg any farther then thus. Either first, that though we cannot do it, yet for ought we know it is *possible*, (nay it hath a *Being*) with *God*; or secondly, that *God* hath *affirmed* it so, therefore I am sure it is; or thirdly, that comes to me from *authority*, that I have no reason to *suspect*, but on the contrary concurrence of all *Reasons* to be *perswaded* by it; nay, there are some inward *Characters* in the thing it self, that makes me cast off all jealousie or doubt of such affirmations, and therefore I believe it is so. But generally, and *in thesi*, it is no way *Judge* of these last kind of *Controversies*. *Sect.* 15.

And therefore though *God*, in *moral actions*, even in himself, submits and appeals to *mans reason*, *Isa.* 5.3. *Ezek.* 18. 25. yet in these latter he derides all those, that goe about to *judge* of them by *reason*, 1 *Cor.*1.20. And agreeably Saint *Paul* in his Preaching the *Gospel*, for the proving the truth of *Christianity*, was fain, saith [a] *Origen*, to use a peculiar way of *demonstration*. First, by *comparing of Prophecies* in the *Old Testament*, concerning *Christ*: Secondly, by *Miracles*; but in *practical* matters he appeals to that which was *written in every ones heart*, Rom.2.15. *Sect.* 16.

a καὶ θειοτέραν παρὰ τὴν ἀπὸ διαλεκτικῆς ἑλληνικήν. Cont. Cels. p. 4.

To this purpose hath *Eulogius* an Oration against those, who think to be able to comprehend the true *Theology of Christians* (*i.e. Christians* discourses concerning the *Persons of the Deity*) [b] *by the Wit, or Reason of Man*; and *Photius* hath approved of that discourse of his, that he doth [c] *talk of God Piously, and devoutly*, and set *Christian divinity a pitch beyond humane wisdom*, [d] *superior to all other* [e] *artificial method, or rules of Art*. *Sect.* 17.

b ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ἐπινοίαις, p. 862.

c θεολογεῖν εὐσεβῶς.

d καὶ κρείττω πάσης ἐπιτεχνήσεως. e Vid. Just. Mart. p. 5. & 6. A & 8. C. 9. A. *So* Just. Mart. p. 375. A. *& for the* πῶς τοῦτο, p. 379. *So for the* τρόπος *of the union of Christs natures*, 382. B. σαφὴς ἔλεγχος ἀπιστίας τὸ πῶς περὶ θεοῦ λέγειν, 386. B. 387. D. 388. A.

Sect. 18. In sum, it is observable in the writing of the *Scripture*, that generally in defining these *last* sorts of *Truths*, Gods *authority* is set down, as the onely *proof* of what is said, without using any other way of *arguing*, or secular *demonstration:* All that is indulged to mens *Reason*, being onely this; First, to consider, whether it be not very *equal*, and *reasonable* to believe God, without any other *motive*, or topick of *proof*, even in those things, which are *above*, or *beside Right Reason*, nay, *against* the proposals of *corrupt*; and secondly, to search (by what helps soever a *reasonable* mans *prudence* and *diligence* can suggest, or furnish him with) which is that Word of God, which contains these *revelations*, which *Reason* tells them, they must *believe* without farther *reasoning*.

Sect. 19. But not to suffer my self to *believe* any thing (though *revealed* by the *Scriptures*) but what *Reason* otherwise would lead me to, is the same that *Celsus* perswaded the *Heathens* (of his side) to, against *Christ*, to [f] follow *Reason, and the rational guide in all the doctrines, we receive, all error and deceit being*, saith he, *brought into the world by Faith*; and that they that believed any thing without *Reason* for it, are like them that delight in *Juglers, &c.* and therefore he laughs at all those who *requiring* not *Reason* for what they *believe*, use this phrase, [g] *Doe not examine but beleive, thy Faith shall save thee, as men that are displeased with wisdom, and in love with folly.* To all which *Origen*, as acute a *Reasoner* as any, opposes nothing, but the *Evidence* of *Prophecies*, and the *Word of God* for this rule of *Faith*. Which if it be not *simply beleived* without any *Philosophical rational enquiry*, concerning the things affirmed in it, many will of necessity still wallow in *infidelity* after all that *God* hath done for the rescuing them out of it, and only a few find that by *rational search*, which before they *beleived by simple Faith*.

[f] λόγῳ ἀκολουθοῦντας καὶ λογικῷ ὁδηγῷ, παραδέχεσθαι δόγματα, ὡς πάντως ἀπάτης γινομένης τῷ μὴ ὅτῳ συγκατατιθεμένῳ τισί. *Orig. cont. Cels. p.* 8.

[g] μὴ ἐξέταζε, ἀλλὰ πίστευσον, πίστις σε σώσει σε.

Chap. III.

Of the power of the affections and interests in matter of Faith.

Sect. 1. THe belief of *Christianity* being in the *first Chapter* supposed to be thus sufficiently recommended to the *understanding*, which is a *wel-natured* faculty, and very ready to hear *Reason*, when it is offered to it: There is but one *obstruction* possible, and that is from mens *affections*, or *interests*, and that by two ways of proceeding: First *mediately*; secondly, *immediately*.

Sect. 2. First, they work *mediately* by the *will*, and have sometimes that unhappy *influence* upon that, as by their importunity to perswade it to *interpose*, before the full *representment* or *proposal* of the object, and so to hinder the free access of the *Argument* to the *understanding*.

Sect. 3. Thus we see it often in *prejudicate* and *passionate* men, who are impatient of hearing or considering any thing that may *dispossess* them. And thus we see it sometimes in those of a *better temper*, who yet being unwilling to lose any *advantages*, which they can make use of to maintain their present perswasions, are so intent upon their own part of the *dispute*, that they do not receive the *opposite Arguments*, with that equal *Justice* of improving them to the height, with which they are offered, or to which if it had happened, that they had undertaken the *maintenance* of the other part, they could have *heightned* them. This latter, being not an effect of so great a *distemper*, is not so discernible (to our selves especially) as the other, but yet is a *fault*, and that of ill consequence, and a deviation from the rules of *distributive Justice*, which would allow as much of our *attention*, or *diligence* to the improving of the *Arguments* of the one part, as of the other, and expres as *impartial* a *kindness* to the *Neighbor* as to *my self*. And in all this the *Will* is culpable for being thus (more or lesse) *instrumentall* to the *affections*: And so it is *Negatively* also, whensoever we do not use that *industry of search* as our *condition* permits, and the *importance* of the *matter* requires of us.

But

Sect. 4. But then secondly, The *affections* and *interests* do themselves *immediately*, sometimes, perform their own business, they *cloud* and *darken* the *understanding*, and make it less *capable* and *receptive* of such *representations* as are made to it.

Sect. 5. This made *Aristotle* to affirm, That *Pleasures* are in some men [a] *corruptive of principles*, *i. e.* that those common *dictates of nature*, *&c.* which are by all unbyassed men naturally consented to as true, and unquestioned, do yet to *voluptuous* men (and the same holds in matter of *fear*, and *interest*, and the other *passions*, and ill *habits* also) become matter of *dispute*, whether they be true or not; not because in *Reason* any thing can there be offered fit to infuse scruples into a *rational man*, or to combat with the far greater potency of *Reason* on the other side, which denominated them *principles*, but because these *rational* dictates having somewhat in them which is contrary to, and unreconcileable with *passions*, and *sensitive pleasures*, those consequently that have indulged to them, and espoused them, as the most *desireable* things, do, for the enjoying of them, *undervalue*, & despise the *rational Arguments*, which would cost them so dear (even the parting with their *lusts*) if they continued in that *reputation*, which is due to them.

a Φθαρτικαὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν.

Sect. 6. Hence is it, that the more prudent of *Heathen* Philosophers have proposed it as the best preparative, to the *studying* and search of *truth*, to have mens *affections* and *appetites* well regulated first (though not by reading, or studying the *Books*, and *Science* of *Morals* or *Ethicks*, yet) by [b] *assuetude*, and *virtuous custome*, by *inartificial precepts*, *and sober education*, *&c.* moderating and tempering their *passions*, and bringing them [c] *to live Orthodoxly*, [d] lest having their *Reason disturbed by passions*, *they be not able to pass an exact judgment of things*; And *without this*, say they, *it is as impossible for a man to behold and judg aright of truths* (such truths as have any thing any way contrary to *passions*) [e] *as for a man with sore eyes to behold illustrious splendid objects*, *without being anointed or cured of their distemper*.

b διὰ ἀγράφου συνεθισμοῦ, καὶ ἀτέχνων παραινέσεων τὸ ἔθος ἡμῶν ἀπευθυνόντων. Simplic. in Catheg. Arist.

c ὀρθοδοξαστικῶς ζῆν, κατὰ τῆς Ηθικῆς ἀποτελέσματα, Anonym. Schol. in Categ. d ἵνα μὴ τεθολωμένον ὑπὸ τῶν παθῶν τὸν λογισμὸν ἔχοντες, τὰς περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων κρίσεις μὴ ἀκριβεῖς φέρωμεν. Id. e ὥσπερ ὀφθαλμῶν λημῶντι, καὶ οὐ κεκαθαρμένῳ, τὰ σφοδρὰ φωτεινὰ ἰδεῖν οὐκ οἴοντε, οὕτω καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ μὴ τὴν ἀρετὴν κεκτημένῃ, τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐνοπτρίσασθαι κάλλος. Hierocl. in Præf. ad χρυσὰ ἔπη.

Accordingly

Accordingly it hath been obſerved in the firſt Ages of the *Church*, that *luxurious* and intemperate men were of all others moſt hardly brought to *beleive* the *Chriſtian Doctrine* of the *Reſurrection* of the *Body*, and *Immortality* of the *Soul*, becauſe their *carnal joyes* being ſo *material* and *groſs*, and contrary to what *Chriſt* hath taught of an *Eternall life*, and of *Spiritual bodies*, and *bliſs*, their *being* ſo deeply engaged, and immerſt in the former, fortified them pertinaciouſly againſt all impreſſion from the latter, and enabled them to hold out finally againſt the *beleif* of thoſe *Chriſtian Truths*, which others of more ruly tempers, upon equal *Reaſons*, and the ſame repreſentation, did moſt readily embrace and aſſent to.

Sect. 8. And it is worth our preſent conſideration and enquiry, whether they which are now moſt willing to entertain *doubts* of the *truth* of *Chriſtianity*, are either more ſharp diſcerners of *truth*, then all others, that are not (or then *themſelves*, before they) arrived to this pitch of *Stanchneſs*, and *Scepticiſm*; or again whether they have ſeriouſly ſpent any conſiderable time in reviewing their *Principles*, and, doing ſo, have ſprang any ſpecial *new Arguments*, which they had not conſidered before, and thoſe of ſuch *weight* with them, that they wil contentedly expoſe themſelves to all the *torments* of Hell (the ſure reward of an *Atheiſtical Antichriſtian* life) upon the bare *probability* of thoſe their *Arguments*, (which cannot be *rationally* done by them, unleſs their pretenſions againſt *Chriſtian Religion* exceed ours for it, in ſtrength of *credibility*, as far as an *eternal Hell* exceeds thoſe *ſhort ſufferings* of this life, to which *Chriſtianity* betrayes us, or as an *eternal ſtate* of *ſpiritual bliſs* in *Heaven*, doth ſurpaſs the *tranſitory*, unſatisfactory *ſhort* pleaſures of *ſin* in this life) or whether it be not really their freer indulgence to ſome *liberties*, which Chriſtianity admits not of, (and that more againſt light, and againſt the importunity of Gods judgements, then before) or perhaps ſome *change of affairs* abroad, which hath made the *practiſe* of *Chriſtianity* a more inconvenient, coſtly thing, then it was wont to be; moſt men being willing to have the *advantages* of Religion, as long as there be but few, and ſupportable encumbrances, that attend it; and after changing their opinion of it, when they have run any *hazards by it*.

Sect. 9. Which truly is so far from being *new*, or *strange*, that it was a part of the *Character*, that our *Christ* set upon himself, and his *Doctrine*, both in that *parable* of the *Seed, that fell upon stony ground*, which is supposed to be scorched at the *rising of the Sun* upon it, and by that cloze of his answer to *Johns Disciples*, *Blessed is he that is not scandalized at me*, foretelling them that the most eminent and considerable danger to *Christian Religion*, is, That they which in prosperous times are forward *professors* of it, will, when their *Religion* begins to offer them *smart*, fairly *forsake*, and fall off from it.

Sect. 10. Thus much hath been premised to this second *Head* of *Arguments*, on purpose to shew the influence, that matter of *advantage* may have on *belief*, and that on either side, not onely where mens *interests* do chance to thwart their *perswasions*, but also, and as discernibly, when they appear on their sides, to assist and confirm them.

Sect. 11. For so certainly did the *sweetnesse*, and *wel-tastedness* of the *Manna* work as effectually on the *Faith* of some *Jews*, make them as willing to adhere to *God*, and *Moses*, in opposition to returning to *Egypt*, as the *new* miraculous *manner* of the coming of that down upon them; and the *Milk* and *Honey of Canaan*, were very good motives, and *alectives*, and *engagements* to the *faith*, and *obedience* of others: And so in like manner the *carnality* of the *paradise*, that *Mahomet* promised to his *disciples*, hath much advanced the *credit*, and facilitated the *beleif*, and disguised the *grossness* and *absurdities* of the *Alcaron*.

Sect. 12. And because *advantages* are not to be disliked, because they *are* such, but because they *pretend*, and are mistaken to be such, when they are *not*, and by so doing, do rob us of those that are *truly* so, or that are infinitely *weightier*, and more considerable; and because that which is *really* the most *advantagious*, is always most *rational*, most *prudent* for man to choose and pursue, and aspire to: Therefore it is, that to the former *Argument* of the *reasonableness* of the ground, or *testimony* on which we believe *Christian Religion* to be true, I now proceed to the advantages, that those that embrace shall reap by it, both because most mens Objections against *Christianity*, are founded in an opinion, that it is not an *advantagious* profession, and would have no other

quarrel

quarrel to it, if they were satisfied that it were, and also because though *advantageousness* no way contributes to the making, or proving a thing to be *true* or *false*, yet it doth to the maki g it more or less *worth beleiving*, or embracing,(for every slight *truth* is not such) and so more or lesse fit to be set up in our hearts, as our *Religion*.

For that by *Religion* every man entertains hopes of acquiring somewhat of *benefit* to himself, and would not chuse to enter into those bands, if he did not promise himself some *advantage* by it, is a *maxime* ,which I shall not think fit to prove, or confirm in this place. *Sect.* 13.

Chap. IIII.

Of the advantages of Christian Religion in the gross.

THere is nothing therefore after the *testifying* of the *Truth*, so proper for this present disquisition, as the consideration of the *advantages* of *Christian Religion*,and those advanced above all other *imaginable advantages* of any other *Religion*, as much as the *credibility* of *Christian Religion* is above the *credibility* of any other that pretends against it. *Sect.* 1.

This I am by my premised method obliged to consider here onely as true in the *gross*. And that will be done by this one consideration, which hath been enlarged on * in other Papers: That the *Precepts* of *Christ*, especially his *supperadditions* to the former *Laws* of *Moses*, and of *Nature*, are, beyond all the contrary *vices*, or the lower *degrees* of the same *vertues*, perfectly agreeable to *Humane reason*,cultivated,and improved,and heightned by *Philosophy* ; so that that shall confess those things to be still most *commendable*, and most *excellent*, which *Christ* hath thought fit to command his followers. This might be demonstrated through all particulars ; but I shall more strictly restrain my self to the *advantages* of a *Christian life*, by considering it first in order to *outward*, and secondly, to *inward advantages*. *Sect.* 2.

* Second Sermon on *Matth.* 30.

The *outward advantages*, are again more *publick*, or more *private*: *Sect.* 3.

vate: Or the publick there is none sure more *valuable*, and more *fundamental* to all other, then that of *Peace*, and that is so immediately and inseparably annext to the *Christian Doctrine*, that would men think fit to be guided by that *rule*, were but *Christs precepts* constantly *practised*, there would be no occasion of *distemper*, or *disturbance*, through the world, either between *Christian Potentates* among themselves, or betwixt any *Christian Prince*, and the *Subjects* of his own Kingdom.

Sect. 4. First, *In what state or condition soever a man is placed in any Nation* be he *King* or *Subject*, this commands him most strictly *therein to abide with God*; every man to *content* himself with his present portion, whether it be of *Soveraigntie*, or of *inferior* estate under *subjection:* Then secondly, whereſoever the *Supremacie* of power is placed by the *Laws* of any Kingdom, there *Christ* requires *subjection*, and *non-resistance* in *all* subjects; and both by himself, and in the writings of his Disciples [b] repeateth and impresseth that far more earnestly on the *subject*, then he doth the dutie of *protection* on the *Supreme*; and where they [c] conjoyn them both, there they *begin* constantly with that of *subjection* in the inferior, as being of more universal concernment to the *peace* and preservation of the whole, and as that which earns the superiors performing of his dutie, as a due *reward* to their *obedience*. Thirdly, Christ prohibits *self-love, thinking highly of ones self*, all *covetousness*, *ambition*, *animosites*, *revenge*, *doing*, or *returning of injuries*, *whisperings*, *backbitings*, *distrusts* and *jealousies*, all *scrupulous preventions* of *remote* possible *dangers*; and fourthly, he commands *doing as we would be done to*, *blessing of enemies*, *contempt* of the *world*, not valuing any thing which is most tempting in it, and, above all things, *pursuing* of *peace*, with *all men*, (in the greatest extent imaginable) *as much as in them lies*, and *whereever it is possible*, even over the whole world. And fifthly, the *Precepts* delivered by *Christ*, (plain and intelligible to all) as they are a *standard*, by which every man is to *measure* his *own* actions, so are they also to *examine others*, and consequently they will fortifie against *seducers*, and *slie disturbers* of a peoples *peace*, if, according to *Christs* direction, we trie them by their *fruits*, and reject and stop our ears against all those, whose *doctrines* bring not exact *concordance* to *Christian*

[b] Matth. 22. 21 Acts 23. 5. Rom. 13. 1 Pet. 2. 13, 18.

[c] Ephes. 5. 22, 25. & 6. 1, 4, 5, 9. 1 Pet. 3. 1, 7.

practise

practise along with them. And where these *precepts* are put in practise, what possible inlet is there left, for *disturbance* or *sedition* to enter?

After *Peace*, *Plentie* is the most desireable *publick* good, and that is hardly separable from the former; but, beside the contributions, which all the fomenters of *peace* have made toward *plentie* also, *Christian Religion* hath peculiar waies of ascertaining any people of that, if its *Laws* be embraced and *practised*: For, first, *Christ* commands *labor*, and *industrie*, and *diligence*, banishes the idle, as a [f] *disorderly walker*, disbands him as soon as he appears to be such. Secondly, he makes the rich man his *Almoner*, or *Steward* to distribute to every mans wants, as he is able; and as he *blesses* his *liberalitie*; and renders it the most probable course to make him *rich*, so he convinces him, that *gathering*, and hoarding up wealth is the *meanest*, and withall the most *disadvantageous follie*, and that the only *real commoditie*, in riches, is the *joy*, and *happiness* of *relieving* others, and the *enhansing* of their future *reward* by so doing. Thirdly, he forbids *rapines*, *defraudings*, *gaining* to our selves by any *other* mans *losses*: And fourthly, by putting the *wealth* of the world in a *channel*, to descend from *superiors* to *inferiors*, from him that *hath* to him that hath *not*, from the part that is *filled*, to that other that is *emptied*, he makes a certain *provision* for every part of the bodie. And beyond all this, fifthly, he hath taught men, that all the good of plentie is to be enjoyed in a *competence*, or a *sufficience*, (and that there is onely more *trouble*, and more *charge*, and more *fears*, and more *temptations* annexed to any greater *abundance*;) And sixthly, he hath given all his *faithful* servants *assurance*, that he that hath the disposing of all, and knows what they have *need* of, will never so *destitute* them, that they shall want these *necessarie things*. And when *plentie* is thus *interpreted*, and these *provisions* made for it, there will be little possibilitie, that any people that *live* according to these *rules*, shall fail of that certain *benefit* of them. *Sect.* 5.

[f] ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντες. 2 Thes. 3. 6.

Then for the *private outward advantages* to every *Christian liver*, they will be as discernible also. And these are of *two* sorts, First, those that have an *universall influence* on the comfortablenes, and *cheerfulnes* of the *whole* life, without which neither *Sect.* 6.

health, nor *Wealth*, nor any *particular advantage*, will have any *taste* or *relish* in them. Secondly, Those *particulars* of *health*, &c. Of the first sort, I shall be confident to prefer the observance of one *Christian* Precept, *Attending* to a mans particular *calling*, which, as it is the strict *dutie* of every *Christian*, of what rank, or quality soever, so is it that, which *sweetens* the whole life to him, that lives *orderly* according to that rule. It is certain that *assuetude*, and *custome* hath a *moral* efficacie in it, to make every thing *pleasant*, that is *accustomed*, (were it not upon that score, it is not imaginable, that some *sins* to some men, which have *naturall aversions* to them, should ever be taught to go down so *smoothly*.) By this means, *business* and *bodily labor* it self, which at the distance seemes most *uneasie*, to those that have been brought up in it, proves most *pleasant* and *delightful*. To such an one *idleness*, and *Want* of *employment* is *really* the most *uneasie* affliction of his life.

Sect. 7. And for him that is not brought up to either of these, yet we see by *experience*, and are able to give the *reason* of it, from the *active* temper both of the *bodie*, and *minde* of man, that there is no such *constant torment*, as the not knowing what to doe with his *time*, the having his *hours* lie upon his hands; for the *removing* of which, most of the *vain*, or *sinfull mixtures* of our *lives* are sought out, as *cures*, or *divertisements*, and having no real *pleasantness* in them, do yet *imitate* some, by ridding us of the contrary *uneasiness*, the *burthen* of that idle time, which is made more supportable by such *varieties*. Thus hath that *uncharitable*, and very *mean qualitie* of *censuring*, and *bakbiting*, and *deriding* of others, become so *frequent*, and *fashionable* in the world, (so inseparable from all our *conversations*, the onely modern *good companie*, as it is called) onely because many persons have no other *imployment* for their *time*, but that of *talking*, and of that sort this is the most obvious to those, who have neither *zeal* enough to their *own good*, nor so much of *friendship* to those with whom they converse, as to make the *faults* of one another (in order to the *reforming* or *fortifying* one another) the subject of their discourse. To this and all other *sins* and *vanities* of this nature, this dutie of *attending* the *calling*, is a certain *Antidote* or *Cure*: The advantages of which cannot be more eminently *exemplified*.

exemplified, then among those men, who by mistake are conceived to have no *Obligation* of *Calling* upon them, I mean those, of the *Nobilitie* and *Gentrie* in a Kingdome. I shall inlarge on this instance a little.

The *Calling* of those that are not born to *Estates*, or *Possessions*, is generally acknowledged to be somewhat of *labor*, or *industry* for the *acquiring* of *Wealth*, and to them may *reasonably* be confined that part of *Adams curse* (which is yet *sweetned* to *Christians* by *Christ*) that *in the sweat of their brows they shall eat their bread*. But then, those that have *ample possessions* left them, *sufficient* for themselves and *familie*, (and much more) and besides, a *perpetuitie* of that to their *families* for ever, are certainly under no such obligation to *labor*, to *encrease* so fair an heap, or to spend that pretious *time* and *sweat*, and industrie on the bringing more water into the *Ocean*, or indeed more *weight* unto that burthen of *wealth*, which lies already an *encumbrance* (more commonly then a *real advantage*) on their *shoulders*. Their *calling* therefore, without question, consists in the *scattering*, not *encreasing*, in the *discreet*, *charitable distribution* of that yeerly *revenue*, which is committed to their *stewarding*, *i. e.* in the using that *wealth* (to the *richest advantages* they are able) to the *service* of *God*. Such is the *spending* their time, as *Citizens* not of one *Citie*, but of the *World*, enquiring what is the *dutie of mankinde*, and how they may serve *God* cheerfully in those Precepts of *Christ*, which are of the *greatest perfection*, observing the *wonderful things* of *Gods Law*, and the *harmonie* which those notes of *discord* make, which to the unskilful or *untuneable* ear are so harsh. This and much more in reference to *God*, and then in order to *men*, the well ordering of that part of the *Common-wealth*, wherein they are employed, the *releiving* of those that want, the *attracting* inferiors, by *Exhortation*, *Admonition*, *Correption*, (but especially by *exemplarie* acts of all *pietie*) to the practice of *Christianitie*, and, as much as in them lies, bringing *virtue* into *countenance*, and *reputation*, into *fashion*, and credit in the world. *Sect.* 8.

That *Wealth*, and *eminencie* of place are very proper *instruments* toward this end, will not be needfull to be demonstrated here, all that is seasonable will be, to consider what a *Treasure* of *Sect.* 9.

Joy

Joy and *Sweetness* would come in to every such person in a *Kingdom*, by a *constant cheerful* attendance on the severals of this *calling*, every one of them infinitely more *proportionable* to the *appetites* of a *generous, ingenuous minde* then any thing else, which his *ambition* could suggest to him: Nothing *vulgar* or *mean* in it, and (beside all the particular *delights* in every act of each) the great transcendent *comfort* of having satisfied *Conscience*, the not having lived an *unprofitable burthen of the Earth*, the having, in some measure, performed the *task*, for which he came into the world, would be to him that comes to *reap* them, unspeakable *ravishments*, though, at the *distance*, perhaps the *sensuall designer* discerns not such *excellencies* in them.

Sect. 10. Next are the *several particular external advantages*, as they are the desired portion of every *individual man*, (which beyond all other prudential methods imaginable) *Obedience* to *Christs Precepts* provides for us. Of this sort, First, the *health* of the *bodie* (the foundation of all other *outward comforts*) cannot better be preserved from *diseases*, then by strict rules of constant *temperance*, and *sobrietie*, and of *fasting*, and *abstinence* sometimes, of *continence*, or *conjugal chastitie*, of *active* and *industrious* pursuit of the business of the *calling*; nor can it better be secured from *wounds* and *maims*, and *violent deaths*, then by *mildness*, and *quietness*, and *sobrietie*, and *bearing of injuries*, all which are the speciall charges of *Christian Religion*.

Sect. 11. The very same practises, beside these proprieties of *advantage* to the *health*, and *ease*, and *strength* of the *bodie*, have in them a far greater *delight*, and *pleasure*, and *gratefulness* to the *senses*, then any of the *unchristian* contraries. No *pleasure* in eating and drinking, like that in the *temperate* feeding on the *plainest*, *wholesomest* diet. and so in the rest.

Sect. 12. For *Reputation*, another special *outward advantage*, it is clear, that besides, that *Christian Religion* teaches every man to *think better of others then himself*, forbids *judging*, and *reproaching*, and *backbiting*, and so most certainly preserves that *Jewel* entire to every man. The *practise of Christian Virtues*, commands *esteem* and *value* even from those, which least exercise them themselves. The *proud man* cannot chuse but *reverence* the *meek*, the *debaucht* man the *temperate*, the greatest *self-seeker* him that most

most *divests* himself of all his *self-interests*. There are not three things in the World, which so certainly bring a *good reputation* along with them, as *Charity*, and *Humility*, and *Constancy*; and these three are the *prime* commands of *Christian Religion*.

After the *outward*, I proceed to the *inward advantages*, the *advantages* of the *Soul*, and those either of *this life* at the present, or in order to *another life*. *Sect.* 13.

The *Christian Precepts* tend evidently to the *bettering* of the *soul* in *this life*: First, by *purging* it: The *Heathen Philosophers*, *Porphyrie*, and divers others, especially the *Pythagoreans*, were much concerned in the *pollutions* of the *soul*, which they discerned, and beyond all things in the World *desired*, and endevoured the *purging* them out, sought to *Magick* and *Sorcery* to that end, but terribly mistook in that way to it. Our *Christ* hath done this by the *Grace*, and *Doctrine* of *Repentance*, as far as is necessary for an *inferior State*. And so, is foretold by the old *Prophets* under the style of [*the desire of all Nations*] and [*the expectation of the Gentiles*] as he that brought with him in his *precepts* and in his *graces*, a full *satisfaction* to all the *gaspings*, and *thirsts*, of the most *rational*, and *earnest appetites* about us. *Sect.* 14.

Secondly, by *cultivating* it with all useful *knowledge*, and true *wisdom*. For such, by the *Oracles* own confession, is *Practical Knowledg* and of that kinde all the *Philosophers* that ever were, never ascended to so high pitches, as *Christs* one *Sermon* in the *Mount* hath done. *Sect.* 15.

Thirdly, by *satisfying* it, allowing it here those injoyments, which of all others a *rationall* soul is *pleased* with, 1. The *pleasures* of *friendship*, of profitable *conversation*, *admonishing*, and *instructing* one another. 2. The *pleasure* and speciall ravishment of *relieving*, and *refreshing* those that *want*, of making a *poor man happy*. 3. The *pleasure* of *contentment*, and desiring nothing but what we enjoy. 4 The *pleasure* of *victories*, in *resisting*, and *overcoming temptations* of all sorts, but especially of *overcoming evil* with *good*; and, whenever there is any *unpleasant mixture*, then 5. The *pleasure* of a *difficult obedience*, thereby to approve our *love* and *zeal* to him, who hath given himself for us. *Sect.* 16.

And fourthly, by *daily rewarding of it*: 1. By the *comforts*, and joyous reflexions of a *good conscience* (as that is set off by the *Sect.* 17.

contrary *Hell* and *torments* of a *bad*.) 2. By the severall *eases* that the severall *Christian* virtues give men here, the *ease* of *patience*, contrary to the *uneasiness* of *rage*, the *ease* of *contempt* of the *World* contrary to the perpetual *drudgery*, and *toiles* of the *Worldling*, the *ease* of the *continent* man, contrary to the *flames*, and *disquiets* of the *libidinous*. 3. By the *present* experience of *Gods* loving kindness here, in answering of those *Prayers* which are *useful* for us; in *denying* those which would be *hurtful*, in *restraining* us sometimes, in *exciting* us at other times, in *speaking peace* to our souls, &c. 4. By *conversing* with *God* by *meditation*, by *thanksgiving*, *singing Hosannahs*, and *Hallelujahs* to him, the most *joyous* employment in the World. Nay, by a perpetuall *cheerfulness*, *rejoycings alwayes*, which, as it would be another mans *reward*, so is it the duty of a *Christian*. 5. By the *exspectations* of a *reward* in *another* life, which though *future*, is yet by the benefit of two *Christian virtues*, *faith* and *hope*, forestalled, and anticipated, and made *present* to us. And all these, if there were not infinitely more, were sure advantages enough to entertain a *short life* of fifty or threescore years, and secure it from being wearisome to a *Christian*, or from needing those sinful, shameful, unworthy *divertisements*, that all other sorts of men, on purpose, that their *time* may not lie upon their hands, are fain to seek out unto themselves.

Sect. 18. Lastly, the *advantages*, which a *Christian* reaps by *Christ*, are in *order to another life*. And those I shall best represent to you, by shewing these two things. 1. The *Valuableness of the reward promised by Christ, and aspired to by Christians, infinitely above all other rewards, that any other Religion pretends to bestow upon men.* 2. *The Attainableness of that reward, and the blame that will light on none but our selves,* (so that we shall be bound to acknowledge our selves most stupidly *wretchless*, and *irrational*) *if we do not attain to it.*

Sect. 19. For the former, the *Valuableness of the Christians future reward, infinitely above the wages of any other Religion*, that will appear, 1. by the *Immaterialitie*, and 2. by the *Eternity* of it: Both those it is defined to be by *Christ*, and by being so, is concluded to be an *eternal, infinitely blisful state*; And that *Christ* said *true* in that, neede not again be *proved*, *God* Himself having

having been proved to bear him *witness*; that all that he said is *true*. The *Immateriality* of this reward demonstrates it *agreeable*, and proportioned to the nobler part of us, the upper or *rationall soul*, all other *grosser* pleasures, the *Mahumetans* enjoying of *Women*, and the *Jews long life* in a *Canaan*, being gratifications to the *viler* parts of us, our *senses*, or *bodies*, and to those too, in their *vilest* state, as they are *natural*, not as they shall be *spiritual* (and *equal to Angelical*) bodies.

Having said this, I need not adde the *shamefulness*, and *emptiness*, and *unsatisfactoriness* of all *bodily pleasures*, proceeding partly from the *covetous ingrateful* condition of that *best part* of us, as the *heathens* have styled the *body*, partly from the great *meanness*, and *poorness*, and *baseness* of all *bodily* contents, (so unworthy to be the *ambitions*, or any thing, but the servants, and attendants of the *reasonable* soul) and the instant *satieties*, and irksomnesses, that they alwayes are attended with, such, as nothing could make any meer man place any considerable value upon them, were not he either cheated into it at the *distance*, by the false glosses that other men put on them, and by seeing, what *hazards* are willingly run in *pursuit* of them; or were he not early engaged in an *habitual* indulgence to them, which makes that difficult to part with, which he hath enjoyed so long, and consequently which *imitates* some *pleasure*, (and is mistaken for it) by the contrary *painfulness* of giving it over. *Sect.* 20.

Whereas on the other side, the *immaterial*, *spiritual*, more *sublime* satisfactions to the *pure* undefatigable *Spirit*, the *rational*, *immortal soul* within us, as they cannot be liable to those *basenesses*, and *emptinesses*, so neither are they in danger of those *satieties*; and by *satisfying*, and *blessing* that part of us, which is infinitely most *excellent* in our *natures*, must of themselves necessarily be concluded most superlatively *excellent*, and deserve, as such, to be infinitely *preferred*, and most *valued* by us. *Sect.* 21.

Having said this one thing of the *immateriality* of the *Christians future reward*, and agreeableness to that part about us, which alone is worth *providing* for (the happinesses of the other *inferior* parts being consequent to, and included in this, and a *provision* withall being (by the wisdom of our God) made for them that they shall no longer *desire*, or want those enjoyments, which *Sect.* 22.

is perfectly the same, if not, with some *advantage*, better, then if they had them) it is not possible any farther *improvement*, or accession should be made to this *reward*, but onely by the *perpetuating* of it.

Sect. 23. And that is that other part of *Christs promise*, That the bliss, which he thus bestows, shall in respect of its own *plenitude* never be *exhausted* or diminished, nor again, through the *Repentance* of the doner, or the *envie* of any other, ever be withdrawn or forced from us.

Sect. 24. And this is a great *enhansement*, and evidence of the *rationalness* of our *Religion*, how severe soever *Christs commands*, or how rigid his *exactings* are supposed to be, or what *sharpness* soever we here are forced, or permitted to endure, in approving our *obedience* to him. If there be any *difficulty* in the *obedience*, or ungratefulness in the *sufferings* of a *Christians* life, yet the abundant *recompense* of the *present* advantages, and, after those, of the *soul-ravishing* unspeakable *bliss* (infinitely above the weight of the *hardest*; or *roughest* part of *Christ* task of performances, and above the proportion of the *sowrest* portion, that any *pious* man tastes in the *afflictions* of this life) were they supposed to be of the same *equal duration*, would make our *hopes*, and *patience*, and *perseverance* perfectly *rational*, according to the *ballances* with which *indifferent* men *weigh*, or *Husbandmen labor*, or *Merchants traffick* here on Earth.

Sect. 25. But when to every minuit of a *pleasant*, not painful *obedience*, to every mite of *pressure* (which *God* that sends, gives *strength* also to *bear cheerfully*, makes matter not of *patience*, but *victory*, and *rejoycing* to us) there is most immutably ascertained to us by *Christ* an *eternal* (ETERNAL) *weight of glory*, how impossible is it, that those *few* soure *drops* of so *short* transitory *obedience*, and *patience*, should not be *drowned*, and lost in that vast *Ocean*, whereinto within a while they shall be really, and at the *instant*, by *Faith*, and *Hope*, they are (in effect, and by *equivalence*) poured out?

Sect. 26. If there be any thing now left disputable in this matter, it must be, whether it will not be justly deemed *irrational*, that *God* should so *over-heap* his measure, so *over-proportion* his wages to us, reward that so *gloriously*, which, if there were never a

Heaven

Heaven hereafter, were, at the present, *reward* sufficient to it self, and infinitely preferrable before the condition of any other mans life. But the *advantage* of that being on our side, we shall have little reason to dispute or complain of it.

The onely thing imaginable to be replied, will be, that *Christs* *Sect.* 27.
inflictions are as *immaterial*, and as *eternal*, as his *rewards*, and the *reason* not presently discernible, why our *short*, empty, nauseated *pleasures*, the *sins* of a *short life*, and the *joyes* of those *sins*, far *shorter* then the *shortest* life, should be punished so *sadly*, and so *eternally*. This scruple of the *Atheist* hath been searched to the bottome, and answered * in other Papers; and the brief of it is this, That the *choice* being referred to us, to take of the two, which we *best like*, *Eternal death* set before us on the one hand, to make *eternal life* the more infinitely *reasonable* for us to *chuse*, on the other hand, and the *eternal Hell* (whensoever we fall into it) being perfectly our own *Act*, neither forced on us by any *absolute* decree of *Gods*, nor *irresistible* temptation of the *Divel*, nor our own *flesh*, but as truly our *wish* and *choice*, and mad *purchase*, nay, much more truly, and properly, then *eternal Heaven* is (when our *obedience* is first so wrought by *Gods Grace*, and yet, after that so *abundantly rewarded* by the *doner*,) it is certain that if there be any thing *irrational*, it is in us *unkinde*, and *perverse* Creatures, (so *obstinate* to *chuse* what *God* so *passionately* warns us to take heed of, so *wilful* to *die*, when *God swears*, *he Will not our death*) and not in him, that hath done all, that is imaginable to be done to *reasonable* Creatures (here in their way, or course) to the *rescuing*, and *saving* of us.

* Pract. Cat. last Edition, pag. 303. 304.

And so this hath by the way demonstrated also, the *attain-* *Sect.* 28.
ableness of that *reward*, and the no kinde of fault of *Gods* (he hath sent his *Prophets*, his *Son*, his *Spirit*, his *Ministers*, his *Mercies*, his *Judgements*, all sorts, and new methods of working *deliverances*: and *salvations* for us and all *slaughtered*, and *crucified*, and *grieved*, and abused by us) but all meerly of our selves, if through our *irrationall prides*, or *sloths*, we do not attain to it. I shall not need therefore farther to inlarge on that, especially having * elsewhere abundantly demonstrated the truth of it.

* Pract. Cat. 1. Sect. 1. §. 6.

Chap. V.

The exceptions against some particulars in Christian Religion; and 1. *Gods dispositions of Providence.*

Sect. 1. IT now remains that I proceed from the *gross* to the *retail*, from the *general* to the *particular* view, and consideration of those *particular* branches of *Christian Religion*, which seem to men at this time to be least supported with *Reason*. And they will be of two sorts, either concerning *Gods Providence*, or concerning *Gods Commands* now under the *Gospel*. The first concerns his *wisdom* in dispensing the things of the *World* among men, the second his *choice* of *duties*, wherein to *exercise* us.

Sect. 2. For the first of these, it will briefly be reduced to this question, *Whether it can be deemed rational, that injustice should prosper, and patience never be relieved or rewarded in this life*; as it is every where taught to be the *Method of God*, and is most eminently exemplied on *Christ* himself, in his own person, in the *Gospel*.

Sect. 3. Where first, If the *question* were, whether *Injustice* could be really *favoured by God*, or by him so approved, and encouraged, as to be thought worthy of any the least *reward*, though but of a *cup* of *cold water*, by him, or (as consentaneous to that) whether *Injustice* by going *unpunished* here, and by being *triumphant* in this World, might be thence concluded to be an *act* either of *sanctity* or of *innocence*, owned, and commended, and justified by *God*, by its thus prospering, I should then, I confess, acknowledg this to be *irrational*, and not plead, or undertake to be the *advocate* of that *Religion*, which should teach one such Doctrine as this.

Sect. 4. For this were to make a *God* (who by being such, is supposed to be of an *immutable Wil*, and *justice*) to become *inconstant* and *contradictory* to himself, to forbid *oppression*, as *contrary* to his *wil*, and yet without making any change in the matter (without withdrawing what he hath given to one, and disposing it to another, as in the case of the *Ægyptians Jewells*, and the *Canaanites land*) to *reward* it, as *agreeable* to his *Wil*, to pronounce that

that no *covetous person*, without repentance, *shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*, and yet to give the *covetous*, beside an infallible title to the *Kingdom* of *God*, continued to him, as a speciall *Saint* of his, the addition of all the *blessings of this life*. In a word, this were the same *irrational* thing, as to affirm, that *thief*, which prospered in his *assault*, and actually robbed the Traveller, and perhaps killed him too, to be by that means *turned honest man*, and that nothing but miscarrying in his attempt could denominate, or demonstrate him a *thief*; that no *sin* were any longer a *sin*, if it were once acted, no *oppression* any longer *oppression*, if it were permitted to come to its *fulness*; that every the foulest violence as soon as it were come to the *height*, bearing down all the *resistances* of *divine* and *humane* Laws, and *force*, did then presently cease to be *violence*, and by being the *lowest* fiend in hell commence *ipso facto* the most *rewardable Saint*: And therefore the onely *Religion*, that hath been known in the World to maintain and countenance this, that of the *Turk* or *Mahometan*, I profess to believe absolutely *irrational*.

But for *Christianity*, that is so distinctly contrary to this, that *Sect.* 5. the great fundamental *History*, upon which all our *Religion* at once is built, is the most lively *example*, and *doctrine* of the *contrary*. For when Christ himself was delivered up into the *power* of wicked men, and by them arraigned, and reviled, and crucified, not onely the *Disciples*, which were his constant attendants, but his *Army* of *Miriads* of *Angels*, that were alwayes at his command, doing nothing toward his release, when this consultation of the *Sanhedrin* became successful, and obtained the desired event against him (the *highest*, and most *prosperous oppression* of the greatest *innocence* and virtue) then though there were more circumstances, which might affixe this on God his *Father*, and seem to draw him into partaking in it, then we finde recorded of any, or all other *sinful* actions (as that Gods *Hand and Counsel did foredetermine this to be done*, that God *foretold* it by all his *Prophets*, and from the certainty that they could not lie, doth, when it is done, conclude, that *Christ ought thus to suffer*, that they that did it, even the *chief Rulers* of them, Acts 3.17. had the excuse of some *ignorance*, untill Gods *raising* him from the dead dispelled this mist from before their eyes, that what

God

God had thus *foretold*, and *predetermined*, viz. that *Christ should suffer*, *he had thus fulfilled*, Acts 3.18. that he that suffered, voluntarily *laid down his life*, and by a speedy taking it up again, was freed from the *saddest* part of *death*, the remaining under the *power* of it, nay was, in the issue, so far from being the *worse* for *suffering*, that, beside the glorious *advantages* that came to his *disciples* and *children* by it, he himself was in that *humane nature* of his highly *rewarded* and exalted for this his suffering; though, I say, all these circumstances concurred to make the *injury less*, the crime more excusable, and altogether more fit, and more honourable to be *charged* upon God, and so to turn it from the crime of *murther*, to the *vertue of obedience to* Gods *will*, and charity, and benefaction to mankinde, (and even to him that *suffered*) yet this *one act* of the Jews, their doing, against the express *command*, *and will of* God, that thing, which yet was by *God* * *determined to be done*, their *crucifying* an *innocent* person, that desired nothing, but their *amendment*, their committing that act, which by *God* was forbidden, under the *Commandment* of *murther*, is thought fit by that *God*, whom the *Christians* worship, to be punished most *prodigiously*, and *exemplarily*, that ever any sin of the deepest die, and the most mischievous effects, was ever *punished*, even with the utter desolation of the whole *Nation*, and all the *prodigies* that have been read of, the greatest *pomp* of aggravating circumstances, the calling Heaven and Earth together, to make the execution of these *crucifiers* the more *solemn* and *remarkable*; so far is *Christianity* from owning any such *irrational* doctrine as this.

* προωρισε γενεσθ.

Sect. 6. But this being thus disclaimed, and the *Doctrine*, which is acknowledged to be *Christian*, being cleared to be onely this, that in *Gods dispensations* and providence, and governing of the World, under the *Gospel*, it is not unusual for *injustice* to *prosper*, and *patience*, and *innocence* never to be relieved, or rewarded in this life. This I shall now assume on me to be clear to be perfectly *reasonable*; and it shall be by thus taking it asunder.

Sect. 7. First, That *wicked* men should be permitted to be *wicked* when all fair *rationable* means have successlesly been used to bring *them* to *repentance*, to restrain them from waxing worse and worse; that they that will not *mend* by all the *probablest*, and most effectual means, should at last be *left* to themselves, and become

become *incorrigible* ; that *God* should not proceed from *perswasion* to *violence*, and *force* them to be *good* (contrary to the nature of man in this his state of *proficiency*, who was created with a *will*, or freedom of doing evil, if he *pleased*, and contrary to the nature of free, and rewardable *goodness*, which, if *compelled*, ceaseth to be such) who will not be *restrained* from evil without force : This will never be deemed *rational* in *God*, who hath another *Tribunal* to arraign, and punish those, who will not submit to *Exhortation*, and *Discipline* here. But on the contrary it will very ill become the servant of *God* for his own *ease*, and *security*, to wish the disturbance of that method of *God* with mankinde, to expect that man, which, when he was in *innocence*, was created with a *liberty* to *chuse the evil*, should now amidst the *briers*, and *thorns*, after the provocations of a long vitious life, have such *shackles* laid on him, as that he should not be able to break *Gods Bands* and *Laws* ; and all this onely that the *good* man may be protected, who, if he be not, knows that 'tis far more for his *advantage*, then if he were.

Secondly, That they which are *wicked*, and have cast off all *restraints* of *Divine* and *Humane* Laws, which break through all the ties, and securities, that *promises* and *oaths* can lay upon them (the greatest protection for *innocents*, that any *Religion*, or *Law*, hath ever provided for them) should, by these *advantages* above other men, be able to *over-reach*, and *defraud* others ; and by this means having acquired a *power* of hurting, should, when they have it, *make use* of this *power*, to do what is most agreeable to their *lusts* and *interests* to do, This again hath nothing in it *strange*, or *irrational* : It is far more *strange*, that it is not alwayes thus, that (*wicked* men, allowing themselves all the *liberty*, and being by their very sins furnished with all *armor*, and *instruments* to work their will, and all *innocent* men, that resolve to continue such, being by this means *disarmed*, and *naked* before them) the *wicked* should not get the *whole World* into their possessions. *Sect.* 8.

This certainly were to be expected, and by this means all that have *wicked* inclinations, would, in any humane likelihood, be encouraged to act to the height of their *power* of hurting, were there not a peculiar hedg of *providence* to defend the *meek*, without *Sect.* 9.

out any of their own (considerable) *contributions* toward it, to guard them wonderfully in the *open field*, without any visible means of doing it: And if this shall otherwise happen at some one time, perhaps but once in many Ages, and that for some very great end, in *Gods Wisdom* more considerable to the *God-like* Government of the *whole World*, then the miraculous rescuing of a few *meek innocents* from a *short oppression* (in *earthly things*, which are not worth their *possessing*) could be deemed to be; there is sure no great *wonder* in this, nothing *irrational* in the sometimes *permitting* of it.

Sect. 10. He that were secured in his *inheritance* in a quiet *Kingdom*, as long as any man enjoyed his own, as *Majesty* were permitted on the *throne*, or *Law*, and *Justice* on the *bench*, would never desire a fairer conveyance, or a longer lease of the most valued possessions of this life; and this security remains to the *meek* man, though *once* in many *Ages* it may have happened not to prove *good* unto him.

Sect. 11. And as there hath been nothing *strange*, or *irrational* on the part of the wicked oppressor that *prospers*, so next on the part of the *patient*, or *sufferer*, that *smarts* under him, there will appear to be as little.

Sect. 12. For first, *Absolute innocence* is a thing, which (save in the person of *Christ*) hath never been met with in Man or Woman on the Earth; and therefore he that is guilty of no fault in *one* particular, may yet be *culpable*, and punishable in *many* others; he that is legally possest of an estate, and hath done nothing to *forfeit* it in *Law*, may yet have sinned against *God*, and so have *punishments* due to him from that *eternall Justice*; which if they fall upon his *body*, or *estate* in this World, there is nothing *irrational* in that, but especially if so *light* a Discipline may passe for all the *revenge*, and (through the *sufferings of Christ*, and interposition of mercy) avert all future punishment, and be accepted in *commutation* for the torments of another Judicature, this sure is all the *charity* and *bounty* in the World, that may be *admired*, but not *complained* of as *unreasonable*.

Sect. 13. Secondly, That those that for their *other faults* might justly be *punished*, should have this *punishment* inflicted on them by those

those which themselves are *wicked*, and are *actually* such in thus *afflicting* them, If this seem to have any thing *unreasonable* in it, it will soon be answered by the *necessity* of the matter, which makes it *impossible* for any but *wicked* men to be employed in it. The *Israelites* were once used to *root* out the *Nations*, but that by an *infallible Commission* from *God*, the *Supreme Law-giver* (and whose *will* being once made known, over-rules all former *Laws*) and the universal owner and disposer of all the World, and the possessions thereof: And by this *Commission* this became to them not onely *lawful*, but *necessary*, an act not onely of *justice*, but of *obedience*; and so upon the like *Commission*, the *Levites killing* their Brethren was an act of *sanctity*, a *consecrating* themselves unto the *Lord*, those *bloody Sacrifices* were in a manner the *Ceremonies* of their *Consecration* to their *Priests Office*. But then, first, all this depended upon the infallible *validity* of their *Commission*, which had it been falsly *pretended* by them, or had they not been ascertained that it came from *God*, their actions had been as *ungodly*, and *murtherous*, as *Abrahams sacrificing his son* must have been deemed, without the like *Commission*: And secondly, this *Commission* was by no means to be enlarged to any other, but those *particular subjects*, or matters, to which it was given. The *Jews* might not at that time have *destroyed* or *invaded* any other *Nation*, upon the face of the Earth, nor ~~might the~~ *Levites* at any *other time* have *killed* their *Brethren*, on strength of that command, much less may any *other People* of any other Nation, on strength of that *example*. And so now that such *Commissioners* are *out-dated*, when all is left by *God* in the hands of *standing Laws*, in opposition to *new Revelations*, and consequently when that which is most *just* for me to *suffer*, or *God* to *permit* (or by prospering in him, to inflict on me) is most injurious in him that doth it, were it not perfect *fury*, much above the pitch of *irrational*, to demand that *Gods deerest Children* should act as the vilest men? To require such explicite *contradictions*, that none but *godly men* should be permitted to *oppress*, to *kill*, to commit *Sacriledge*, to *lay waste*, and to *destroy*, to *break* all those Commandments of *God*, which he that doth, *ipso facto*, ceaseth be to *godly*? If there be

any *Wickedness* to be done in a *City*, shall the *righteous* be the onely men to doe it? This were worth *wondering* at indeed: But for the *wicked*, whose *trade* it is, whose *joy* of heart to be thus forever *occupied*, he is in his *element*, he needs no *call*, or *incitation* to do it. The *turning* him out of that *office*, and employing any body else, were the greatest *unkindness* to him, as the *casting the Divels* out from *tormenting* the man, was by them looked on as the *destroying them before their time*, whereas the *Angel of Light*, would have looked upon it as a degree of *Hell*, had hee been sent in, on that errant to *torment him*.

Sect. 14. Thirdly, Beside the perfect *reasonableness* of having offenders punished *temporally* here, (which were *reasonable*, if it were for ever in *another World*) there is a second, not onely *Justice* but *Mercy* in such *sufferings*, on whomsoever they fall. They are *Admonitions*, and *Doctrines*, and *Spirituall Medicines*, *Disciplines* of the soul, to *awake* us out of *secure*, and *stop* in *wilful* sinning, and are by *God* on purpose made use of to that end, when *prosperity* hath been long used, and *experimented* to have no such *auspicious* influences in it, to be proper to *feed*, and *foment*, very improper to *starve*, or *subdue* enormities. And if the *Physitian* administer a *bitter* Potion, if the *Surgeon* apply a *Corrosive*, or *Caustick*, when *Julips*, or *Balsoms* are judged, and proved to be *uneffectuall*, sure it is not the manner of men to count such methods *irrationall*.

Sect. 15. Nay, it will be no *Hyperbole* to affirme, that the addition of such *documents* as these, may sometimes deserve to be *preferred*, and *more* pretiously *valued*, then all the Doctrines in the Book of *God* it self without these, one such seasonable Application, then all other Receipts in his *dispensatorie*. The Word of *God* gives rules of living to all men, but those so *general*, and *unapplied*, that it is ordinary for *passionate* men not to see themselves concerned in them. These *punishments* and *visitations* will be able to bring *home*, and make us, while we are under the *Discipline*, confess, that we are the very men to whom by peculiar *propriety* they appertain.

Sect. 16. But there is yet a *third* sublimer *benefit*, of such dispensations

tions of *God* under the *Gospel*, which will render them *abundantly rational*. And that is the exercise of many *Christian graces* of the greatest price in the sight of *God*, and such as shall be sure to be the most richly rewarded by him, which were it not for such *changes* as these, would lie by us *unprofitably*, such are *Patience*, *Meekness*, *Humility*, *Contentedness* with whatever lot, faithful *dependance* on God in all *outward* things, *thanksgiving* for *plenty*, and for *scarcity* too, a submitting to Gods *Will* in *suffering*, as well as *doing* it cheerfully, yea, and to his *Wisdom* too, in resolving Gods *choices* for us to be absolutely fitter for our turns, then any our own *wishes*; and lastly, that *Wisdom*, which Saint *James* speaks of, the skill of *Spiritual judging*, which can really *prefer* this state of *suffering* for *Christ*, (an excellence that *Angels* do not partake of) beyond any *other* state or condition of life. James 1. 5.

Sect. 17. Were it but onely for the *variety*, that all the *burthen of the day* might not lie on those *graces*, which are exercised in *fair Weather*, but that those other, provided for the *storm* or *winter*, might take their *turns* and give them some *relaxation*, this would be very *rational* and useful for us, as *Aristotle* saith, that the *change* of motions from *up hill* to *down hill*, and so back again, doth provide against *lassitude*, more then the *constancy* of any one, be it in the easiest *smoothest plain*, because that layes all the burthen incessantly upon *one* pair of *muscles*, without any *relief* or *assistance* from any other. But when withall, every *exercise* of each of these graces hath attending it an addition of more *Gems* in our *Crown*, more degrees of *Glory* in another World, (that I may not adde also of *present Joy*, and *Satisfaction*, and *Ravishment* in the *present* exercises here) then sure the *superfluities*, and pleasures of this life, the any thing that is ever taken from us by the *Harpies*, and *Vultures* of this World, are richly *sold*, and parted with by the *Christian* (which knows how much, or indeed how little they are worth enjoying) if they may thus bring him in that rich fraight of never fading bliss in another World. And this will serve for justifying the *rationalness* of Gods dealing with us now under the Gospel, in respect of his *Providence*.

Chap. VI.

The exceptions against Christ's Commands.

Sect. 1. IT remains that I proceede to *Christs Commands* under the Gospel, and shew the *rationalness* of them.

Sect. 2. And having done it so largely already on the head of *Advantages*, I shall now onely descend to that one, against which our *Modern Exceptions* are most frequently made, *viz.*

Sect. 3. The great Fundamentall dutie of *taking up the Crosse to follow* Christ; *i. e.* of approving my Obedience to Christ in all and every particular, even when the *extreamest danger*, the *loss* of my *Life* is like to be the *Price* to be paid for it.

Sect. 4. The *unreasonableness* of this is argued and concluded from the contrarietie of it to that *liberty* of *self-defence*, and to that Law of *self-preservation*; which *nature* is supposed to dictate to every man. And the shewing the weakness of this Objection, will be a full vindication of the *rationalness* of the Precept.

Sect. 5. And this is done by putting us in minde, what is meant by *Self-preservation*, and what by *Nature*, and what by Law. A man is made up of a *Body*, and a *Soul*, a *mortal* and an *immortal* part, and those may be considered either *severally*, or *united*: And consequently *Self-preservation* may be set to signifie any one, or more of these four things. Either, first, the *preserving* that *material mortal* part of him from present *hurt*, or secondly, *preserving* the *immortal* part of him in *well*, and *happy being*, or thirdly, *preserving* the present *union* of one of these with the other, or fourthly, the providing for the *perpetual* happy union of them *eternally*. The *first* is the *preserving* the *body*, and with it the *estate*, and *liberty*, and *reputation*, &c. from present *loss* or *diminution*. The *second* is *preserving the Soul* in *innocence*, or *virtue*. The *third* is *preserving* of this *life* of ours, which wee live in the *naturall Body*. And the *fourth* is *providing* for a

joyfull

joyfull Resurrection, and an *everlasting Life* attending it.

Then for *Nature*, that may signifie either *blinde unenlightned Nature*, which sees no more then the *reflection* upon it self, and the *Book* of the *Creatures*, and *Natural instincts* represent to it; or else *Nature*, as it is enlightned by *Revelation*, *i. e.* by Gods making known some things in his *Word*, which *Nature* had never known, had they not been thus *revealed*: Such are the Doctrines of our *Faith*, and particularly the *eternal rewards*, and *punishments* which are *revealed* to us in the *Scripture*. *Sect.* 6.

Then for *Laws*, those may be either *absolute*, and *peremptory*, which yield not to any *superior Laws*; or else *conditional*, and *subordinate*, when a *superior Law* doth not interpose to the contrary. *Sect.* 7.

To bring all this home to our present discourse. If by *self-preservation* be meant either the *first*, or the *third* notion of the *self*, the *preserving* my *body*, or my *life*, then though it may truly be said that it is a *Law* of *Nature*, that men *may*, and that (when no *superior* Law requires the contrary) they *ought*, and are bound to *preserve* these *imperfect mutilate* selves, these *bodies*; yet then as there is a *higher* notion of a *man* then as that barely signifies his *Body*, his *Soul* being the far more *excellent part* of him, and the eternall union of *body* and *Soul* together, being most eminently the Notion, that he is concerned in, so there must be a *superior Law* of *self-preservation*, then that which commands onely the *preserving the Body*, and though *bare un-lightned Nature*, that is able to look no farther then this *life*, doe not give any *Law* in this matter, yet *Nature* being supposed instructed in the *Christian Doctrine*, that there is *another life* of *Body*, and *Soul* after this, to last for ever, must needs be resolved to do it, it being impossible, that *reasonable Nature*, when two things are represented so distant, as the *life* of a few yeers here in the midst of such sad *mixtures*, and an *everlasting life* hereafter in the *fulness* of all *joyes*, should not enjoyn the preserving of the *latter*, even with the *contempt* of the *former*, when the *care* of the *former* may bring any *danger* to the *latter*. *Sect.* 8.

The short of it is, That when *eternal life* is in the hand of *Sect.* 9.

Christ

Christ to give to them, that continue *obedient* and *constant* to him, and to none else, and when the *fearing of them which can hurt, and kill the body*, the caring for, or *preserving* of this *present life*, doth at any time, or in any case, *resist*, or *obstruct* the performance of that *duty*, which *Christ* then requires or expects from me; there *Nature* commands me to *despise* the less, and *preserve* the greater; and if it be not absolutely *willing* to *Sacrifice* the *present* to the *eternall Life*, and consequently to prefer the obeying of *Christ* to the preserving of this fading *short life*, it must acknowledge it self a *blinde Heathen Nature*, (that knows nothing of an *eternall future life*, and of him that can *cast both Body and Soul into Hell*) or else an *irrational* wilde *Nature*, that knows these distances of *finite*, and *infinite*, and doth not thinke them worth considering.

Sect. 10. It is therefore my most charitable opinion of those that object the Principle of *self-preservation* to the Doctrine of *taking up the Crosse*, and determine us free from the *Obligation* of paying obedience to *Christ*, when it cannot be done without endangering of *Estate*, or *Life*, that they speak out of their *memory* onely, what they have read in Books of that *supreame Law* of the *preserving ones self*, but do not withall remember, that if that *self* signified onely the *Body*, it was the *Philosophie* of them, that knew nothing of the *immortality* of the *Soul*, or the *endlesness* of an other *Life*, or if they were aware of the *Christian Doctrines* of *eternity*, they never called the *Body*, that *self*, that was to be so solicitously tended.

Sect. 11. And therefore it is observable in the first Ages of the *Church*, that those *Hereticks* that were *enemies of the Crosse of Christ*, that taught it to be [a] *indifferent* and lawfull in time of Persecution to *forswear*, and *renounce Christ*, and offer Sacrifice to *Idols*, were a sort of men (the *Gnosticks*) that immerst themselves in all *unnaturall filthiness*, and depended not at all on the *Promises* of another Life, and having first taught, that

[a] ἀδιαφορεῖν εἰδωλοθύτων ἀποφευομένους καὶ ἐξομνυμένους

ἅπασα φυλάκτως ἡ πίστις καὶ τὰς τῶν διωγμῶν καιρός. Euseb. l. 4. Eccles. Hist. c. ζ τὸ ἀρνήσασθαι ἐν ἀνάγκαις ἀδιάφορον. Euseb. l. 6. c. λη. *out of* Origen *on* Psal. 82.

V

Christ

Christ did not [b] *really suffer* in the *Flesh*, but onely in *appearance*, would not be perswaded that either hee had any [c] *need of their lives*, or indeed exspected it from them, [d] being *come*, as they said, to *save their lives*, to *die*, that they might not be *killed*. Where the mistake was clear and visible, that they thought they were these *transitory Lives*, that *Christ* came to *preserve*, and not those *other lives*, which were to be conveyed over to *Eternity*.

b οὐκ ἀληθῶς, vid. Ignatii Ep. ad Smyrn. οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ δοκήσει, vid. Cyril. Hier. Catech. περὶ αἱρέσ.

Non hic, nec apud homines confessionem putant constitutam, sed in cœlo. *Tertul. cont. Gnost. c.* 10. [c] Nec Deus humanum sanguinem sitit, nec Christus vicem passionis, quasi ipse de ea salutem consecuturus, exposcit. *Tertul. cont. Gnost. cap.* 15. [d] Semel Christus pro nobis obiit, semel occisus, ne occideremur, si vicem exspectat, num & ille salutem de meâ nece exspectat? *Tert. cont. Gnost. c.* 1.

The *fate* of those *Gnosticks* at that time, was very *remarkable*, and that which will render our *irrational* fondness of these *bodily lives* yet more *irrational*. Their great care was to *preserve* their *lives*, and their prime dexterity, in order to that, to comply constantly with the *powerful persecutor*; that was, especially, with the *Jews*; (for though the *Sword* was in the Heathens hand, yet the great malice against the *Christians* was in the *Synagogue*, from * thence *sprang all the Persecutions.*) To this end, those *Gnosticks* took upon them to be great *zealots* for the *Mosaical Law* of *Circumcision*, and generally pieced with the *Jews*, and approved themselves to them. At last the *Roman Army* comes against *Jerusalem*, takes *Jews*, and *Gnosticks* together, and destroyes them all; and so *Christ* was as remarkably a true Prophet in that, as in any one particular, *That he that would save his life, should lose it*, (that very temporall life, that all his compliance with the *Jews* was designed to *save*) *and hee that would lose, i. e.* venture, and *lay down his Life for Christs sake, should finde it, i. e.* have it more probably *preserved*, and *continued* to him here, then they that were most *solicitous* for it, and, whether he lost or kept it here, have it restored to him to *continue eternally*.

Sect. 12.

* Synagogæ Judæorum fontes persecutionum, *Tert. b.* 10.

And if that *promise* of the *Gospel* have truth in any sense of it; then is the *command* no *irrational command*, of *taking up the Cross to follow Christ*, when he can, if it be for thy turn, except

Sect. 13.

of *thy taking up the cross*, without its *bearing* thee, or, if he do not, can *pay* thee *abundantly*, for what thou losest, *reward* thee with *Eternity*.

Sect. 14. If I could foresee any other *command* of *Christ*, that could fall under our *jealousie*, and censure: I should proceede to it, and be confident of approving it exactly *rational*. As it is, I am at an end of my designed *Method*, and am glad it hath been contrived into so small a compass, being now at leisure to retire to my *Meditations*, which will, I hope, be more calm, being thus disburthened, and make it my first Theme to *discourse* with my self, how extremely *rational* it is, that those very turns of Providence, which have been our great temptation, and they say, made many *Atheists* among us, should be *reviewed* again, and upon *second demurer* thoughts *engage*, and instruct us *all* to become more *Christian*.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things; Prudent, and hee shall know them? For the wayes of the Lord are right, and the just shall walke in them, but the transgressor shall fall therein, Hos. 14. 9.

FINIS.

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